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**Author(s):** Marjorie Ruth Humphreys

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‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study.’

# **MARJORIE RUTH HUMPHREYS**

Dissertation submitted to the University of Chester for the Degree  
of Doctorate (**Counselling Studies**).

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## ABSTRACT

A heuristic investigation was undertaken in which four counsellors who live with a significant amount of chosen contemplative silence in their lives were interviewed in order to explore the impact, if any, that their way of life had on the therapeutic relationship. The in depth, open ended interviews took the form of the narrative enquiry. As the 'bricoleur' my analysis was based on an emergent design utilizing heuristic methodology. The literature search which revealed a paucity of previous material demonstrates that silence in the lives of counsellors enhances their way of being with clients, making them more self aware and able to relate at a deeper level. The interviews discovered that whilst there were a number of benefits to the counsellor, there were also some difficulties to address. The benefits were an increased self-awareness, relational depth, mindfulness and acceptance. The difficulties raised were that the subject of contemplation or meditation is a difficult area to verbalize, there is a reticence to be transparent about it, and that there are occasions when the fact that the counsellor has access to something that is not understood by the client this may impair the counselling relationship. Findings are presented in the form of individual depictions of each of the four co-researchers, a composite depiction and a creative synthesis. Further research would be beneficial to explore this phenomenon in more depth.



## **DECLARATION**

The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

Signed.....

**MARJORIE RUTH HUMPHREYS**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Co.R                                    | This refers to the co-researchers where verbatim data is presented.   |
| Ma                                      | Ma is an abbreviation of my own name Marjorie and is used in the Outcomes Section to refer to my own verbatim data. |
| Sil..oi, Sil.oii<br>Sil.oiii & Silo.oiv | These are the codes representing the individual co-researchers.   |





## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Apophatic**

Relating to a tradition of no speech as in the experience of the desert nuns and monks, or referring to a practice of contemplative silence (Baker 1995).

### **Bricoleur**

The literal meaning of the French word bricoleur is 'handyman or handywoman'. In relation to this research project the meaning implies that the researcher has 'invented' her own analysis. This does not mean that the researcher is given a free reign and can do as she likes but rather that the researcher, following the heuristic method, finds that the design and analysis emerges and takes its own course. It is important for the researcher to be flexible in order to allow this process to emerge (Maykut & Morehouse 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define bricoleur: '...a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomena under analysis' (p2-3).

### **Contemplation**

For the purposes of this research, contemplation is understood as disciplined rapt attention, resting, gazing or knowing beyond knowing. Attempts to verbalize the experience fail, because the act of contemplation transcends emotions, feelings, and the thinking and reasoning process (Hall 1988).

### **Epoche**

Epoche is a process undertaken by the researcher in order to be aware of and eliminate as far as possible her own assumptions and prejudices in relation to the phenomenon being researched. It is vital that the researcher is able to set aside her own viewpoints (Maykut & Morehouse 1994).

### **Meditation**

Meditation refers to the act of pondering and reflecting upon words or an object in order to draw some personal meaning. The experience is an activity of the intellect and reason (Hall 1988).

### **Perspectival**

Perspectival is an alternative word to replace the word subjective. The word subjective may be perceived as unscientific and sloppy and so I have chosen to use perspectival in this study in order to eliminate that view as far as possible (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:19).

## **Silence**

Silence is an ambiguous concept and can be perceived of as lack of noise. However, if I declare that complete silence can be achieved then I am deluding myself because even if all exterior noise within my range of hearing is eliminated, I have to come to terms with my interior sounds. Within the counselling arena relating to this research I suggest that the definition of silence is lack of conversation either verbalized or by other means such as body language.



## **PART 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

‘It could be argued that those who sit quietly and do nothing are making one of the best contributions to a world in turmoil’.  
(Watts, 1957 p.175)



## PREAMBLE

The phenomenon of counsellors who choose to live with contemplative silence evokes a myriad of paradoxes and unanswered questions. Counselling is known as the talking therapy and to challenge communication by dialogue with the apophatic tradition seems to suggest that I am an enemy of the counselling world.

I am not suggesting that words are of no use; they are an important part of life, but as explained in Zen Buddhism (Watts, 1957), in Christian Mysticism (Baker, 1995) and in Person-centred counselling (Mearns & Thorne, 2000) words are there as a framework to point beyond, towards presence and being, towards real relationship, spontaneity and the mystery of something other. Dominating our culture and inhibiting us in the Western world is the assumption that all knowledge is represented by words or some system of signs such as mathematics or music. It is symptomatic of our Postmodern culture that silence, stillness, spirituality, faith and anything which is difficult to define in words is respected less in academic circles (Watts, 1957).

My exploration of the phenomenon of silence began more than fifty years ago, when I was a small child. I remember vividly making space for myself and valuing the mystery of **being**. I knew it was an integral part of my spiritual journey and later recognized it as a vocation to be a solitary at heart.

Investigation of the subject of silence was re-kindled when in 1990 I discovered the historical figure of Julian of Norwich, to whom Brian Thorne (2000) often refers. The image of Julian of Norwich helped me to make sense of my world and to resonate

with the concept of this way of life. My exploration continued in a more academic way as I began to research the subject for my Diploma in Counselling in 1999.

Whilst studying for my Diploma I became aware that the Personal Development Group is often the first experience of silence for trainee counsellors and some find this a difficult concept. Whether positive or negative, disturbing or peaceful, full or empty, within the silence something is happening (Nash, 1992). Buber (1958) uses the term 'I-thou' quality of relationship. This is spiritual relationship (Clarkson, 1995; Kelcourse, 2001) and difficult or almost impossible to define in words (Wosket, 1999). Contemplation is a way of life that is grounding and needs a great deal of discipline. Words flow copiously in my struggle to write about no words, yet these words are inadequate because what I am attempting to portray is beyond the language I have available. In order to express thoughts, feelings and ideas, I discover I use poetry or creative language that transcends literal meanings.

## RESEARCH QUESTION AND FOCUS OF ENQUIRY

There is no doubt that I have discovered a question that will ‘hold the wondering gaze and passionate commitment of the researcher’ (Moustakas, 1990 p.40). According to Moustakas (1990), this is an essential prerequisite for heuristic research.

My question emerged over a number of years, beginning with a dissertation title for my Diploma in Counselling. For that piece of work I investigated the subject of silence in very general terms. My fascination with the phenomenon of how choosing to have times of silence in my own life impacts on the therapeutic relationship has been extended to other counsellors in this study.

Feedback from colleagues and my research supervisor facilitated reflection on my initially over-complicated question for this Masters study. This was pruned in order that the focus of enquiry was made explicitly clear (Moustakas, 1990 p.41). My focus of enquiry is:

‘A heuristic study of the impact on the therapeutic relationship of counsellors who have chosen to experience a significant amount of contemplative silence in their lives’.

And my prosaic question that I posed to the co-researchers is:

‘As a counsellor who lives with silence and the contemplative life, what is the impact, if any, that you perceive you have in the therapeutic relationship?’

Moustakas (1990) points out that the researcher must strive to be humble and not hold a single pre-supposition, so as to be in a position to learn. I needed to work through a process in order to address my own assumptions, one of which was that silence in the lives of counsellors would produce a positive impact on the therapeutic relationship.

As Moustakas (1990) suggested, I considered the process of becoming the subject of my research and spent time imagining myself to be silence. This is recorded in my journal (See appendix IX).

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF PROJECT**

### **Aims**

This exploration is bound to reveal conflicts and paradoxes (Elliott and Williams, 2001) perceived by counsellors who live with silence as an essential element of life, yet live in this noisy, fast moving, Post-modern Western culture with the emphasis on solutions and pressure to perform to time limited contracts. This study relates to counsellors bringing their own way of being into therapy, and how that impacts on the therapeutic relationship. The co-researchers involved in the study have chosen the discipline of the contemplative life, with planned times to **be** (Baker, 1995). This is not a process of misanthropy, escapism or rejection of the world (Williams, 2003), but rather contemplative silence requires discipline and is explained as an ‘attention’; an inward attitude towards the deep realities of the soul (Lacout, 1985).

### **Rationale**

In asking the research question, and taking into account my life experiences and particularly my own perceptions and discoveries which are an essential element in the initial steps of the research process (Moustakas, 1990), I hoped to discern whether the phenomenon of silence has sufficient relevance to counselling. I wanted to discover whether or not the co-researchers perceived that by practicing contemplative silence an extra dimension was brought into the therapeutic relationship and, if so, what that extra dimension involved or how it was worked out. The gap in theoretical literature prompted me to focus on a potential need for counsellors and trainers to learn more about the subject and hence decide whether to include it in their practice or course material.



## **Context of research**

Spirituality and religion are contentious and ground breaking issues, researched by West (1998a, 2001, 2002, 2004); Thorne (Mearns and Thorne, 2000); Thorne (2000); Worsley (2000) and Gubi (2001, 2002, 2004). West (2004) notes that although prejudice persists, both spirituality and religion are being increasingly respected and integrated as part of the whole person and therapeutic process, and Lindsay (2002) recognizes that to leave spirituality out of any of the helping professions is to diminish the work. Counselling as a profession in its present form is perceived as a very new concept in history, and although it has its roots in religion (West, 2004) it is now secularized. A comprehensive account of the historical context is included in the literature review.

This research enquiry is based on a phenomenon that is on the periphery of the counselling world. Spirituality is on the 'edge' of the profession and silence and contemplation are on the 'edge' of spirituality. I am therefore attempting research that is at the cutting edge and breaking through into new horizons, to pioneer territory that has hardly been disturbed within the counselling world (Page, Weiss, Wright, McAuliffe, Ugyan and MacLachlan, 1997).

## **Overview of study**

This heuristic study is an investigation of four counsellors who live with contemplative silence in their lives and who participated in in-depth interviews. The findings are presented using the heuristic methodology of individual and group depictions and a creative synthesis. This is followed by a discussion relating the literature search to the data analysis.

**PART 11**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Beyond words...there is a world to which books can point,  
But which books can never describe.  
(Wright, 1997)



## **OVERVIEW**

In addition to books previously collated, a search was conducted using electronic resources to find relevant research literature on the subject of silence in relation to counselling. Using a thematic approach I identified issues and questions within the literature. These are presented in the form of an historical overview of silence followed by issues regarding counselling in relation to silence and spirituality, prejudice against spirituality within counselling, prayer within counselling and how silence impacts on and is used in the therapeutic relationship.

## **APPROACH**

With an awareness of the paucity of research material based on my specific enquiry, I approached this study with some reticence. My choice of how I undertook my literature review was reduced considerably due to the lack of relevant data (McLeod, 2003). I considered the narrative, the evaluative and the theoretical review all of which were inappropriate (McLeod, 2003). Using the thematic approach I was able to identify relevant distinct issues and questions within the literature. This type of review was flexible because some sort of order could be created within a complex area of work (McLeod, 2003 p.19). The importance of placing research in an historical and social context (McLeod, 2001 p.116) is recognized and is presented within this chapter.

## **SEARCH**

My search commenced with data from research papers and books I had already collated and which are in my possession. For the purposes of my extended search I used electronic resources. Using the words ‘counsel/silence’, ‘silence/counsel’, ‘silence/client’ and ‘silence/contemplation/client’ ‘Assia’ found four documents of which only two were useful, ‘Web of Science’ found one hundred documents of which none were useful, and ‘PsychInfo’ found one hundred and fourteen documents of which four were relevant. The research papers, journals and books suitable for this review span a time-scale from 1958 to 2005. The documents that did not apply to my specific research question were mostly studies about clients who were silent for reasons such as trauma or child abuse. I also extended my search by networking. I received documents or book references from colleagues and contacted academic researchers and authors such as Brian Thorne and Peter Gubi who are key links between counselling, spirituality and silence, in order to obtain relevant data.

## **LITERATURE**

Using the thematic approach for my search I grouped together research papers journals and books. Commencing with an historical overview of silence followed by a preliminary discourse that explores the wider picture I then progressed towards more specific critical reviews of relevant material.

### **Historical Overview of Silence**

West (2004) notes that counselling has its roots in religion and I traced specific instances of writings about religion and spirituality, particularly concentrating on the contemplative and mystic traditions throughout history, in order to place the relevance of silence in context.

Early writings from more than three thousand years ago such as the bible and Buddhist teachings suggest that the search for meaning is an aspect of life that has always been in place in some form. Wise people, sages, gurus, prophets, philosophers or spiritual people with great faith, have been known to give counsel, most of whom were familiar with the concept of silence in the form of meditation or contemplation. In previous generations before counselling as we know it today, the church ministered to the needs of people and to the search for the meaning of life (Baldwin, 2004). Historically we find that people who were most in touch with themselves and others, and who were able to offer very deep, meaningful and profound insight and to be intuitive, were people who spent a significant amount of time in silence.

Tracing this thread of silence through history as well as the desert fathers and mothers in the first century, I would like to draw attention to two significant and influential

people. One is Julian of Norwich (Wolters, 1996) to whom Brian Thorne (2000) frequently refers. Julian was a mystic who lived in the 14-15<sup>th</sup> centuries and was a recluse living in a cell in silent contemplation. She found that people were drawn to her and she gave counsel through her window. In a similar way the contemporary, Thomas Merton, found that when he 'left the world' to become a Trappist monk, living in silence created for him the space to be more in touch with the world, and the world came to him. He wrote 'my monastery....is a place in which I disappear from the world as an object of interest in order to be everywhere in it by hiddenness and compassion' (Nouwen, McNeill & Morrison, 1982 p.66).

Griffiths (2001) points out that medieval scientists were searching for the underlying various natural phenomena and they considered questions concerning God, the human soul and ethics to be of the highest significance. The medieval Neoplatonic-magical-spiritualist tradition (Lancaster, 2004 p.55) outlook changed radically in the seventeenth century in favour of the mechanistic one. The idea of an organic, living, spiritual universe was replaced and the world of the machine became the dominant culture of the modern era. From that time the priority of science was based on factual knowledge which was believed could dominate and control nature and until very recently science and technology were both anti-ecological and anti-spiritual (Griffiths, 2001). Rationality and science took over as the dominant force due to 'evidence' being considered important.

Now in the post-modern era physics has shown that there is no absolute truth in science and that all our concepts and theories are limited. At the same time the 'neuroscience revolution lies fundamentally in the positioning of experience at the

center of our agenda' (Lancaster, 2004 p.44). Yet modern medicine including psychiatry, psychology and psychotherapy have traditionally grown within a medical model rather than a philosophical one and often loses sight of the 'patient' as an holistic human being reducing psychological health to rational mechanical functioning (Lindsay 2002). Therefore many mainstream therapies no longer deal with the spiritual aspects of human psychology (Griffiths, 2001 p.18). The value of silence seems to have been lost in the process.

### **Preliminary Discourse**

It is believed that to listen fully counsellors must be silent of their own experiences, needs, comments and advice and be silent about their own life and frame of reference in order to empathize (Mearns, 1994; Mearns & Thorne, 1988; Rogers, 1951, 1961; Rogers & Stevens, 1967). Rogers (1986) writes about the importance of the counsellor's ability to be truly still within, allowing the person fully to resonate with the client's experience (Mearns, 1994). Rather than understanding the client or doing anything with the material presented the counsellor is most effective when **being** fully present with no aim or ambition but waiting with empty hands (Baker, 1995). To be totally available and transparent in this way needs discipline, and learning to be silent in one's own life is part of this process (Baker, 1995; Goehring, 1995). There is a danger though, that clients may perceive the counsellor as being absent when a period of silence or stillness is being experienced (Rose, 2002).

### **The continuing polemic debate of spirituality and religion within the therapeutic relationship**

It is believed that when the counsellor is truly still within the self this facilitates an environment for the counsellor to fully resonate with the client's experiencing



(Mearns, 1997). Mearns (1997) suggests that whilst some practitioners attribute working at this relational depth to spirituality this 'tends to foreclose on the issue and does not leave much scope for empirical investigations and further discoveries of an even more fascinating nature' (Mearns, 1997 p.24). However, Thorne (2000, 2002) makes the connection of spirituality and mysticism to the therapeutic relationship, particularly in relation to person-centred counselling, and believes that spirituality is an essential element in the person and the process. Worsley believes he can ethically discuss spiritual experience with those who do not share his 'religious, philosophical or metaphysical beliefs' (2000 p.89). In a later work Worsley (2004) raises the question of whether Person-centred counselling and the Christian faith are complementary or whether they are mutually exclusive which demand a choice of loyalty.

Lynch (1998), a pastoral theologian, discusses the move from modernity to post-modernity. He advocates that in order to encounter the transcendent, it is important to move beyond words into silence. Lynch (1998) goes on to explore the quality of presence also written about by Josellson (1996) and Spinelli (1994) who examine the concept of the real relationship that takes place in therapy allowing accepting dialogue to occur. Using the word 'thereness' Josellson (1996) says that the most therapeutic moments are those when we are fully present and connected to our client, fully participating in the space between (Josellson, 1996; Harries, 2002; Spinelli, 1994) not losing boundaries but connecting deeply, an encounter when something deep and healing happens that resonates. Yet Rowan (2004) notes that boundaries may fall away enabling client and counsellor to 'occupy the same space at a level sometimes termed soul' (2004 p.21). Josellson (1996) goes on to say that she understands that to be silent rather than active and eventful provides a framework for the client that gives

shape to selfhood, thus enabling us to define ourselves as individuals and within a group. The terms 'I-Thou' relationship (Buber, 1958), 'personalism' (Kirkwood, 2003; Nouwen 1989), 'transpersonal' (Clarkson, 1990; Rowan, 2004), 'at-one-ment' and a 'touching of souls' (Cooper, 2005) all point towards a deeper relationship, a presence, something beyond words, something spiritual. Silence points towards something even deeper still, something that no amount of words can ever describe or imagine (Hall, 1988).

Developing the practice of meditation can result in being mindful (Pointon, 2005), enhancing our capacity to be present in the kind of way Freud describes in the term 'even-hovering attention'. This is believed to deepen our connection to well-being, balance and sanity, and helps us to maintain our own equanimity in the face of our clients (Pointon, 2005). Contrary to characteristics of normal psychological functioning Lancaster (2004) suggests that recent research reveals meditation skills help to train a person in the discipline of focusing their attention. He also notes that the aim of contemplative traditions is not that the person has an experience, but rather to realize and participate in special states of discernment (Lancaster, 2004). Qualities of attention and discernment are essential aspects that the counsellor develops and which, according to Lancaster (2004) are enhanced by meditation and contemplation.

### **Compromised roles – Counsellor and/or General Practitioner, Priest, Spiritual Director**

In a qualitative research study Murray, Kendall, Boyd, Worth and Benton (2003) note that roles are in danger of being compromised in some circumstances and the role of General Practitioners (GPs) may overlap with that of counselling. They discovered that GPs considered spirituality to be part of their role when dealing with patients

known to be in the last year of life and that when GPs are dealing with patients facing death this prompts them to approach their patients with a more holistic outlook.

According to Worsley (2000), who has parallel vocations of Anglican Priest and counsellor, his roles are in danger of being compromised. He also points out the difficulty in defining the word spirituality. The fundamental link between counselling and spirituality is explored by Worsley (2000) when he specifically looks at the quality of **being**. His paper is based on his own perceptions and experiences and he states that 'Phenomenology provides the person-centred practitioner with a way of describing in a therapeutically coherent way the beyondness of experiencing' (Worsley, 2000 p.91).

The issue of defined roles and boundaries is also raised by West (2002) when either the client or the counsellor or both are working with spirituality issues. He points out that the danger could be that the counsellor may step over the boundary and take on the role of Spiritual Director. West (2002) in a paper based on a number of his own previous papers, believes that there is a connection between silence and spiritual intimacy where profound insights occur in the therapeutic relationship. West (2004) is fully aware of his own need to spend time in contemplative silence in order to experience his true nature of his spiritual self. He notes that the practice of counselling and psychotherapy in the Western World is predominantly secular, yet these vocations have their roots firmly fixed in the religious traditions of the care of the soul (McLeod, 1998; West, 2000). West (1998b) also notes that it was pastoral counsellors who played a key part in the establishment of the BACP as the professional body for counsellors.

## **Prejudice of spirituality and religion in the counselling arena**

I have not attempted to explore the subject of prejudice against spirituality and religion within counselling comprehensively as this may be worthy of another research project. Rather I have focused on literature specifically relevant to this work and present specific examples. Hick (1999) notes that our present Western epoch is an age of firmly entrenched scepticism concerning the supra-natural. I have already addressed the subject of prejudice regarding Mearns (1997) who suggests that spirituality may inhibit the therapeutic relationship and I note that Gubi (2002) challenged the taboo of prayer in counselling. West (2004) advocates that prejudice against spirituality with counselling persists.

Williams (2003) who has a background of being Head of Religious Studies at King Alfred's College in Winchester, constructed her paper based on her own perceptions and opinions on a talk given in Geneva in the same year. She claims that religion is often condemned by the counselling world whilst secular assumptions generally go unchallenged (Williams, 2003). She posits that religion needs to be put on the counselling agenda alongside other areas of discrimination. In response to Williams (2003), Foskett (2003) in his paper 'Is religion counselling's last taboo?' discusses the danger of adding religious knowledge to counselling because every person's experience of religion is unique. He claims that counsellors should not attempt to be experts but rather to believe in the client's own expertise. No information about Foskett's background is provided and this work is purely his own perception and opinion. This negative theme of misunderstanding and prejudice against spirituality is confirmed yet again by Jenkins (2004) who undertook research with William West as supervisor. He discovered that mental health patients were treated with higher

dosages of drugs when they revealed their allegiance to spirituality and therefore, felt unable to be congruent.

### **Prayer – compatible or contradictory in mainstream counselling?**

Prayer is a theme not generally articulated in the counselling arena and Gubi (2001, 2002, 2004) has researched extensively this matter in relation to psychotherapy. In his qualitative study exploring the use of Christian prayer in mainstream counselling (Gubi, 2001) he interviewed seven counsellor trainers. He discovered that prayer enables the counsellor to be grounded, supported and is a way of understanding the process of silence. It is also noted that silence within the therapeutic relationship can be experienced as prayer or a spiritual space. Gubi (2002) then undertook a quantitative study challenging the taboo of prayer in mainstream counselling and 247 questionnaires were returned from a random sample. This paper addressed the issue of prejudice about the subject of prayer and argued for recognition of its value when working with spirituality with clients. In Gubi's latest quantitative study (2004) surveying the extent of and attitudes towards the use of prayer he used the same sample as in his previous work and applied interpretative phenomenological analysis. It was discovered that a significant number of mainstream counsellors were influenced by prayer at a philosophical level. Participants valued silence or the space between as an attitude of sitting prayerfully or of the spiritual practice of 'holding in mind'. Prayer, which included contemplative silence was seen to facilitate an added depth and energy. Other positive aspects resulting from prayer were grounding the counsellor, a process of growth, empowering and greater connection with the client and self, quietness and balance, inner light and wisdom, centring the self, inner strength, insight, ability to hold the client, healing and clarity.

Listening prayer has been investigated by Goehring (1995), a psychodynamic family therapist. He believes that prayer is compatible with counselling and notes in his paper that listening goes beyond hearing and points towards a transcendent reality. He also perceives that it is in the dialogue or conversation with God that we **become** and that this is only achieved by the discipline of making times of silence. Contemplative Prayer is addressed by Finney and Malony (1985) in a comprehensive report based on a review of literature on prayer, mysticism and meditation. No methodology, validity or ethical issues are addressed in this study. The authors note that contemplative silence is a discipline and an attention on God that frequently results in theistic mystical experiences. In summary it is stated that contemplative prayer and silence are not a neurotic flight from the unpleasant but an interaction between God and self.

#### **Silence used in the therapeutic relationship.**

Silence is associated with client-perceived rapport. This is the conclusion of data analyzed by Sharpley (1997) who investigated the amount of silence during interviews that nine trainee counsellors had undertaken in work with one standardized client. The findings reported that silence is valued most by clients when they are at 'work' and making decisions. Whilst silence may be perceived to be uneventful to an observer it is an active time for therapists (Ladany, Hill, Thompson & O'Brien, 2004). With experience therapists used silence more judiciously. It is noted that greater amounts of silence were significantly associated with higher scores on the outcome measure (Sharpley, 1977).

Silence is perceived as a powerful tool and can result in the facilitation or inhibition of therapeutic work (Ladany et.al., 2004). Ladany et al. (2004) bracketed their own

biases and expectations. They noted that a sound therapeutic alliance is a prerequisite for using silence by counsellors in order to 'convey empathy, facilitate reflection, challenge the client to take responsibility, facilitate expression of feelings, or take time for themselves to think of what to say' (Ladany et al., 2004 p.80). Twelve psychotherapists agreed to undertake a semi structured telephone interview for this study. All therapists used silence with most of their clients. They reported that they educated their clients about how they used silence and that silence enhanced the therapeutic relationship allowing clients to build trust and feel more in control with space to feel supported and understood. However silence could be perceived to be intimidating to the client.

**Imperceptible or Indubitable – how does the phenomenon of silence permeate the counselling relationship?**

Quakers are noted for experiencing long periods of silence in their meetings and West (1998a) in a heuristic study interviewed nineteen counsellors who are Quakers. He began with the assumption that the Quakers spiritual beliefs would impact on their practice and tried to partly bracket off his own experience as a Quaker. He notes that the counselling and psychotherapy profession seem to be fitting into the secular paradigm (West, 1988). Participants professed that their spiritual faith underpins their therapy work and gives them an extra dimension. For most of the participants there was no conflict reported between Quakerism and the therapeutic work and one participant states that it is the silence that supports her. The positive aspects that impact on the therapeutic work are a deeper integrity and truth, clarity, intuition, insight, light, empathy, centring and a presence. It is also reported that spirituality is not an easy subject to talk about.

Undertaking a six month period in isolation and silence as part of a four year retreat was the experience of twenty-three participants. A qualitative study undertaken by Page et al. (1997) analyzed the results of the written responses and reflections of the participants. The responses were rigorously analyzed by three raters into meaningful units of content and thought. It was noted that self-exploration, an important aspect that permeates counselling, is rooted in verbal communication in Western psychotherapy whereas in the Eastern tradition this is facilitated by rigorous silence and isolation. Several of the retreatants felt a sense of happiness or satisfaction and one-third stated that although this was a struggle leading to insight, it was worthwhile and personally rewarding.

### **Summarizing the Literature**

From the majority of data it has emerged that the phenomenon of silence in relation to the therapeutic relationship is intrinsically connected to spirituality. There are exceptions to this assumption, one of which posits that to label any experience of silence to spirituality is to thwart the process (Mearns, 1997).

It is believed that counsellors need to be silent of their own experiences in order to listen and empathize effectively (Mearns, 1994; Mearns & Thorne, 1988; Rogers, 1951, 1961; Rogers & Stevens, 1967). In addition it is noted that silence helps to focus attention resulting in a more connected and deeper relationship (Kirkwood, 2003; Nouwen, 1989; Clarkson, 1990; Rowan, 2004; Cooper, 2005).

Most of the literature agree that the subject of silence is hard to define or describe and that discipline is needed in order to include contemplation or meditation practice into a person's life (Baker, 1995; Goehring, 1995; Page et al., 1997).



The impact that the practice of silence has on the therapeutic relationship includes a number of enhancing and positive aspects that may facilitate growth. These include self-awareness, focused attention, insight, empathy and higher scores on the outcome measure. It is also noted that some potentially negative aspects need to be addressed. These include a danger of losing boundaries and that the counsellor may be inhibited by the awareness of prejudice. Awareness of these issues need to be considered if the counselling practice is to be of a high ethical standard.



**PART 111**

**METHODOLOGY**

Beyond words...there is a Truth that cannot be stated, debated, proved or  
explained but only known and loved.  
(Wright, 1997)



## **PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PARADIGM**

It may be possible to research this subject of silence in the traditional scientific manner using quantitative and statistical analysis that has been the dominant culture for the past seventy-five years (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). From the perspective of the alternate paradigm (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994), a qualitative researcher would regard quantitative research using statistics and numbers rather than words as diminishing the work and stripping meaning as experienced by the participants (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The dominant paradigm in our contemporary culture of quantitative research using the objective stance of the researcher has become accepted and interpreted as more truthful and meaningful. This is known as the positivist approach that insists on objective scientific enquiry and relies on explanation, prediction, proof, and cause and effect sequences (Maykutt and Morehouse, 1994). Yet the positivist position has never been able to adequately explain how new knowledge is discovered (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 p.13). The Post-modern philosophy embraces the belief that no one person has the full truth, no theory can represent the complete truth (McLeod, 1994), and truth can only ever be partial, being considered differently from every person's perspective.

Traditional detachment of the researcher denies that acknowledgement of the passionate involvement is necessary to begin research and to capitalize on the researcher's involvement (Elliott and Williams, 2001; Moustakas, 1990; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). By definition, using subjective methods has become known as meaning less true (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Hence, as suggested by Maykut and Morehouse (1994 p.16) I have chosen to replace the word subjective with 'perspectival' which relates to the focus on perceptions and words, in order to eliminate, as far as possible, the historical assumptions of qualitative, hence subjective

researching being sloppy. Furthermore in this research I have been able to capitalize on my own involvement that has aided my gathering of the data and the data analysis (West (2001) *Beyond Grounded Theory* – CPR - P126-131).

At this point I need to ensure that I am able to articulate to myself the reasons for using qualitative methods in this research project, in order that I am able to defend the project as a 'rigorous and valued piece of scholarship' (Maykutt and Morehouse, 1994 p.2). My choice to use the creative yet scientific heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) method of research is compatible with the fact that I have researched the subject of silence for a number of years and have lived and immersed myself in it throughout my whole life (Elliott and Williams, 2001). In addition I accept that working with paradoxes and conflicts with a sufficient 'tolerance for ambiguity' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994 p.34) are part of life. The paradoxical stance of all qualitative research is of utmost importance to recognize (Elliott and Williams, 2001; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). To be able to be perspectival, aware of my own assumptions and prejudices and at the same time to be objective, is essential in order to study a phenomenon realistically.

Heuristic study takes courage and discipline, the mind and thought processes balancing between two poles. The identity, values and beliefs of the researcher cannot ever be entirely eliminated from the process and all qualitative data is based on the researcher's interpretation, the researcher's self being an integral part of analysis (Denscombe, 2003; Elliott and Williams, 2001; Etherington, 2004d). As Maykutt and Morehouse (1994) suggest I undertook the questioning process of 'Epoche' in order to eliminate or at least become aware of my prejudices and assumptions in

relation to the phenomenon being researched. This enabled me to see the experience more realistically.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The phenomenon of silence lends itself to the philosophical paradigm known as the heuristic approach (Moustakas, 1990). This is a complex process which is difficult to explain prosaically. I will explore in the next few pages how I considered various ways to collate information from the co-researchers and how I elected to use a semi structured interview design. I will then address how the data analysis process evolved based on an emergent design. Firstly though I attempt to set out below, as briefly and clearly as possible, the six phases in the heuristic research design as set out by Moustakas (1990 pp.27-32).

### **Phase One – Initial Engagement.**

This phase involves the researcher discovering a topic or question that has meaning for the researcher that she feels passionate about and feels compelled to engage in a search. The chosen topic or question needs to have implications for her self and for society. The phenomenon of silence has had meaning for me for most of my life. During the past fifteen years, I have felt compelled to read and research this concept in a more academic way and more recently realized the potential implications within the counselling arena.

### **Phase Two - Immersion**

The researcher in this stage immerses herself fully into the defined and clarified question, making use of all aspects of life to understand and become intimate with the phenomenon. Commencing this particular research I focused in a new way on my

experience and pursued different understandings of the phenomenon using self-dialogue and networking with other researchers.

### **Phase Three – Incubation**

This is the important process of retreating or setting oneself aside for a period of time from immersion in the phenomenon in order that the ‘seed may grow’ (Moustakas, 1990 p.29). This is a time when extended understandings occur at levels beyond immediate awareness. As a person familiar with religious retreats I would have been prepared to make a special retreat at this stage for the purposes of this research but an unusual opportunity arose when I was away from my home and work environment for a five week period. During this displaced time I experienced life without my own times of structured silence. Trusting that something was happening beyond my immediate understanding was difficult.

### **Phase Four - Illumination**

Receptivity and reflection are important aspects for the researcher in the illumination period. This is the phase where insights of new, corrected or modified dimensions of experience or knowledge come into the awareness. On my return to the research project after my five week displacement I found that I had up to that point ignored any negative impact that silence in the lives of counsellors might have on the therapeutic relationship. At this point I was able to recognize my assumption, hence I approached my co-researchers from a more a realistic paradigm.

### **Phase Five - Explication**

The most critical aspect of this phase of explication is that of concentrated attention which creates the space for even deeper levels of understanding and meaning. This is

achieved by the process of focusing and indwelling (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:25-27). The researcher gathers together discoveries of meaning and uses them to create a comprehensive depiction of the essence of the experience. After I had gathered all of my data I spent a long period of time in this stage alternating between immersing myself and retreating, until I felt I had refined the data as far as possible. This prepared me to present the discoveries of meaning.

### **Phase Six – Creative Synthesis**

Mastering knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicates the question through tacit and intuitive powers enables core themes to be gathered into a creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). It is customary to use a narrative depiction using a great deal of verbatim material from the co-researchers. Creative forms are frequently presented after periods of solitude and meditation in preparation for this phase. In this respect I was able to use my own times of structured silence in order to facilitate the emersion of the creative synthesis.

I have aimed to summarize the heuristic process adequately and now move on to consider the interview design.

### **INTERVIEW DESIGN**

Moustakas (1990) sets out a choice of three suitable approaches to collate information from co-researchers in heuristic research.

**The informal conversational interview.** This is conducted in an impromptu manner with the researcher and co-researcher experiencing a natural dialogue. Moustakas describes this as one that ‘relies on a spontaneous generation of questions and

conversations in which the co-researcher participates in a natural, unfolding dialogue with the primary investigator.’ (1990 p.47).

**The general interview guide.** This is more focused with prompts for the researcher to explore common information from all of the co-researchers and is described by Moustakas as one that ‘outlines a set of issues or topics to be explored that might be shared with co-researchers as the interview unfolds’ (1990 p.47).

**The standardized open-ended interview.** This is a structured approach with organized questions for the researcher to present to all of the co-researchers.

Moustakas (1990) points out that the first option based on a spontaneous dialogue is the most compatible with heuristic research. I found that I hovered between this and the general interview guide, as it was helpful to have a procedure at hand with some common questions to ask all of the co-researchers. My interview design resulted in my use of a general interview guide (See appendix VII) with appropriate spontaneity.

## **SAMPLE**

I advertised in the Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal Noticeboard (see appendix IV). My intention was to interview one suitable counsellor as a pilot study and then to select between four and six co-researchers for the main study from a possible response of twelve counsellors. I intended to select co-researchers according to experience and because they would be theoretically interesting, rather than being either typical or extreme examples, or representing a cross section for a data base (Flick, 2002; McLeod, 2003).



I received three responses to the advertisement. In the meantime I did some networking which proved fruitful and this provided a further four contacts. One of the contacts agreed to be interviewed for my pilot study and the other six agreed to take part in the main study. Two of the six were unsuitable due to practical reasons which left me with four co-researchers. Due to the small number of respondents, this left me with an imbalance in that they all practice a religious faith and are embedded in some form of spirituality, with one Roman Catholic/Buddhist, One Quaker and two Anglicans. All co-researchers are qualified and practicing counsellors with experience ranging from two to twelve years, working in Primary Care, Anglican Chaplaincy, Private work, and with one Senior Lecturer in Counselling. Three of the co-researchers described themselves as Person-centred and one as psychodynamic/integrative. All are female, are in supervision, have access to a counsellor for personal development and are members of the BACP (See table i below).

**Table i**

**PROFESSIONAL DETAILS OF CO-RESEARCHERS**

|                               | <b>Sil.oi</b>               | <b>Sil.oii</b>                  | <b>Sil.oiii</b>                                      | <b>Sil.oiv</b>   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Years qualified               | 12                          | 5                               | 2  | 10   |
| Gender                        | Female                      | Female                          | Female   | Female   |
| Area of work                  | Primary care                | Primary care<br>Private clients | Primary care<br>Private clients<br>Church of England | Private clients Church of England<br>Senior Lecturer – Dip. Couns. |
| Counselling Orientation       | Person-centred              | Psychodynamic/<br>Integrative   | Person-centred                                       | Person-centred   |
| Spirituality                  | Roman Catholic/<br>Buddhist | Anglican                        | Quaker   | Anglican   |
| Access to counsellor/personal | Yes                         | Yes                             | Yes  | Yes  |

|                |     |     |     |     |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| development    |     |     |     |     |
| Practicing     | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| In supervision | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Member of BACP | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

The ‘snowball technique’ (McLeod, 2003 p.30) was not compatible for this sample due to the small number of contacts available who would meet the criteria for this research. I was also unable to select a variance of co-researchers that would have been ideal (Maykutt & Morehouse, 1994 p.57). It was not even possible to select co-researchers by gender, age or experience (Maykutt & Morehouse, 1994 p.59). However, as Maykutt & Morehouse (1994) point out, it is not necessary to select a random sample but rather to choose, if possible, a purposive sample where co-researchers may represent experience of the phenomenon (Maykutt & Morehouse, 1994 p.57). All of the four remaining co-researchers were practicing counsellors who lived with a significant amount of silence in their lives and I wrote to them with information regarding the nature of the study (see appendix VI).

## **DATA COLLECTION**

One pilot interview was arranged in the co-researcher’s home with a view to receiving feedback. This was a useful exercise because during the dialogue with the co-researcher, I was aware of my own leadings being quite dominant and I was not comfortable with this. As Etherington (2004b) points out the researcher must filter out the co-researchers’ experiences through our own and not superimpose our own experiences onto theirs. As suggested by Maykutt and Morehouse (1994 p.98), after this pilot interview I was able to refine my style.

Interviews for my main study took place at each of the four co-researcher's own homes or workplace premises. I spaced the interviews so that I had enough time between each in order to immerse myself fully in each individual experience.

From an emergent design (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994 p.57) these in depth interviews took the narrative form of dialogues or conversations with as little structure as possible in order to obtain a high level of flexibility and scope. I was aware that it is not possible to conduct a completely structure-free interview, due to the agendas of both researcher and co-researcher (Mason, 2002). As explained earlier I found that I used a general interview guide (see appendix VII) with appropriate spontaneity. Flick (2002) emphasizes that narrative interviews allow the researcher to understand the world of the co-researcher comprehensively, but warns that it does not necessarily allow the researcher to gain access to factual experiences and events. However, although spontaneous interviews are more complex, in recent years heuristic research has become recognized as 'equally valuable as research that tests or verifies what is known or believed to be factually true' (McLeod, 2003 p.93).

I found that my response and sharing of some personal experience of the phenomenon facilitated conversations (Etherington, 2004b; Moustakas, 1990). An essential element in the decision regarding the design of any research is the congruence with the research question (West, 1998b). A level of trust was evident in the relationship between the co-researchers and myself as much rich and deep depictions were readily offered. General questions were formulated and a genuine dialogue took place in each case (Moustakas, 1990 p.47). Each interview did come to a point of natural closing although I had in each case allowed a maximum of two hours so that the co-researcher would be able to have a clear boundary in place.

I successfully made an audio tape of each of the conversations with the co-researchers lasting between forty-five minutes and one hour. After each interview I listened to the tape and spent a period of time in reflection immersing myself in the data (Moustakas, 1990). When I felt I had understood the co-researcher's experience I then transcribed the tape and printed it onto colour coded paper using code names Sil.oi, Sil.oii, Sil.oiii and Sil.oiv to identify each one.

I then proceeded to interview the next co-researcher and followed the same procedure until all four co-researchers had been interviewed and the data transcribed. The typed transcript was sent to each of the co-researchers for verification and feedback. This allowed the co-researchers to check after a period of reflection that the transcript was a true and accurate record and to add any further information which they felt would be appropriate for the study. I received additions and minor alterations from two of the co-researchers.

## **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

My way of life and my discipline of contemplation provided me with the necessary process for heuristic research rhythm. Based on an emergent design (Elliott & Williams, 2000; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) this process developed. As Moustakas (1990) explains I needed to be open minded as the process found its own way, particularly during the immersion and incubation process, with no prescribed course of action. During the process of becoming my own 'bricoluer' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) I discovered that I needed to allay my anxieties and at the very least refer to the detailed procedure set out by Moustakas (1990 pp.51-52). At this

point I think it may be appropriate to expand on the meaning of being a 'bricoleur'. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define 'bricoleur': '..a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomena under analysis' (pp2-3). Being a 'bricoleur' reflects the reality of life that can never be known purely objectively, but only represented. (West 2001 – Beyond Grounded Theory – CPR p126-131). This reflects a grounded theory as described by West (2001) to ensure that my discoveries remained grounded in the experiences of the co-researchers. I was conscious of the need to be rigorous and have scientific approval.

An essential element was the space and solitude between interviews, leaving time to reflect and this incubation process (Moustakas, 1990 p.28) enabled me to discover key themes and findings. During my structured contemplative silent times, the discovery of deeper meanings, depictions and inspiration occurred. I found myself immersing myself in the data and alternating this with other activities in my life such as mountain trekking, swimming, and of course, my normal work routine. It was in these spaces where the real creativity occurred and in time the presentation of the discoveries of meaning and the development of my creative synthesis of the experience emerged (Moustakas, 1990).

My analysis procedure was as follows:

I gathered together the transcripts and papers following one of the research interviews, making notes, particularly in respect of qualities, key words and phrases emerging.

I then constructed an individual depiction of the co-researcher. At this stage I wrote this in the first person, in order to immerse myself as far as possible into their world. Following a period of reflection, I returned to the transcript to check the accuracy of the data, and then re-wrote the depiction in the third person.

I then moved on to the next co-researcher and followed the same procedure until I had written individual depictions of all four co-researchers. I sent copies of the individual depictions to each of the co-researchers to check for accuracy.

The next stage involved gathering composite data from all four co-researchers'. For this I began searching my transcripts, counting key words, derivatives of these words, and phrases. This process was to enable me to gather units of meaning. The counting of words and phrases was a useful and necessary exercise for me because it helped me to compare the accuracy of my own perceptions that I noted after each interview. This process was a positive step towards my understanding and discovery of meanings.

During this process I highlighted all of the key words and phrases and then cut out from the coloured transcripts sentences, paragraphs or longer pieces of dialogue accordingly.

In order to use a creative way of organizing this data I cut out a total of 29 star shapes naming each one with one of the particular words, group of words, or a phrase. This was to be my 'map of the universe' or my map of the units of meaning (see appendix II). I placed the stars on the floor in order to arrange them into categories or clusters using one or more words or phrases as main headings and the rest as sub headings. I made use of the dictionary to enable me to obtain deeper meanings of each of the

words and to find ways of linking key phrases. With the cut out stars of my universe placed into clusters, I then proceeded to place the individually coloured cut up pieces of transcript into the appropriate clusters. This was a complex task as I frequently found more than one phrase emerging in a sentence, paragraph or longer section of dialogue.

Over a period of three weeks I spent times of setting myself aside from the data and then returning to it each time re-arranging pieces of transcript or moving sub headings to other main headings or units of meanings. Many of the words and phrases overlapped and the data could possibly be interpreted in different ways. At one stage I gathered up all the stars (this was like the collapse of the universe – perhaps a red giant!) and had a period of time setting myself aside. This process facilitated radical changes (perhaps this was the birth of a new universe – another big bang) and enabled me to put into the work ‘fresh energy and perspective’ (Moustakas, 1990 p.51).

With the birth of my new universe I created two separate sections. The first section consisted of the practice and requirements or the practical elements of how the co-researchers ordered silence within their daily lives together with the necessary ingredients or requirements. This also included some of the difficulties entailed. The second section included the impact that the silence has on the lives of the co-researchers and the therapeutic relationship. I then developed a data analysis table that showed the number of times each of the key words and themes were mentioned in the dialogues by each co-researcher (see table ii).

Preparing a group composite depiction using data from all four co-researchers was then composed. Using individually colour coded paper helped me to retain the uniqueness of each of the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). I then began to write up the outcomes in key word or theme order. After reflecting on the composite depiction I moved on to developing a creative synthesis. I chose to use poetry to express myself bearing in mind that the concept of silence is incredibly difficult to put into words. Moustakas (1990) recognizes that poetry is a way of listening in the silence for what cannot be heard and is a way of expressing something with words, from the world beyond speech, in a form that takes us beyond words. I then sent the outcomes section, including the individual depictions, the group depiction and the creative synthesis to all four of the co-researchers and invited checking for accuracy and feedback.



## **VALIDITY ISSUES**

In order for research to be taken seriously the subject of the validity of the work needs to be considered in some detail. McLeod (2003) who draws on the review of the work of Stiles (1993) notes that qualitative studies need to be judged on their trustworthiness and sets out nine aspects in detail. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest four criteria and Denscombe (2003) suggests that the researcher asks themselves seven important questions.

Without the space to develop in full all of the above criteria for evaluating qualitative data I draw on the work of McLeod's review of the work of Stiles (1993) noting the vital overall criteria of the rigorous testing throughout the work.

The considerations included in this research project are as follows:

The procedure has been set out as clearly as possible in detail in order that the study is seen to be plausible.

Research presenting the historical, social, scientific and cultural background is included in order that this study is put into context.

Details have been set out regarding the process of how the theory and outcomes have emerged from the raw data.

Examination of my pre-existing biases and prejudices have been addressed, with the intention of systematically considering alternative interpretations of the data.

Included in this research document is a brief review of my personal reflexive account from my journal (see appendix IX). The reason for this is that as my self is the main investigative tool, I understand that it is difficult to evaluate my own credibility.

I have aimed to achieve a high level of authenticity of the material, and trust that the report is an accurate description of the raw material. In this respect I invited the co-researchers to read and check the transcripts and the final analysis and to respond with feedback

Recognition that I need to be sensitive and that a level of trust is necessary when involving the co-researchers in the procedures of inviting them to comment on the study has been considered. I am also aware that the co-researchers have their own needs and that they have made a commitment not only of time but that there may be issues that are difficult for the co-researchers to deal with.

Participating in this study may affect the lives of the co-researchers and in order to be consistent with McLeod (2003) I am willing to continue contact in the event that any delayed effects of the research may emerge.

Although there is a paucity of material on the subject of silence, this study is not an isolated piece of work and it does have relevance and applicability to other works. These are presented in the literature review (McLeod, 2003 pp.94-96).

Due to the nature of qualitative research being the alternate paradigm (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) and less valued in our Post-modern Western culture (Etherington, 2004c), it is even more important to be thorough and rigorous in order to avoid unnecessary criticism or at worst for the research to be considered useless. Internal consistency is considered of the utmost importance when conducting qualitative research (Lynch, 1996). This would 'demonstrate that the research is consistent with the philosophical perspective on which the research is based' (Lynch, 1996 p.144). The work needs to be plausible and sustainable in relation to counselling research with substantial evidence of background material and in context. It is also important that there is evidence of an audit trail (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). In this respect I refer to my data analysis procedure. I have also presented evidence of relevant tables and a synopsis of my journal. Furthermore I have in my possession the audio tapes, transcripts of the interviews and my notes relating to the research. I trust that this work has a high degree of the above criteria.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

High quality research, as set out in the recent detailed works in relation to ethical guidelines within counselling and psychotherapy presented by Bond (2004a, 2004b), should be ethical in order to maintain the standards and good name of the profession. Being a researcher requires a high level of trust (Bond, 2004a, 2004b) and integrity of work. Maykutt & Morehouse note that ‘deceptive practices are not in keeping with ethical practice’ (1994 p.70). The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy actively encourage participation of research on behalf of the profession and note that all research should ‘be undertaken with rigorous attentiveness to the quality and integrity both of the research itself and of the dissemination of the results of the research’ (BACP, 2001 p.7).

The Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2001) also recognizes that the rights of the co-researchers need to be protected including informed consent and the right to withdraw at any point (McLeod, 2003). Permission was sought by the co-researchers at all stages and transparency was considered of the utmost importance. All of the co-researchers signed the relevant consent form (see appendix VIII) and received copies of data for approval and feedback at each stage of the analysis.

The main areas of concern particularly in a heuristic study are that the co-researchers may be easily identifiable due to the amount of possible recognizable data in their stories, even though confidentiality is made expressly clear (Moustakas, 1990; Etherington, 2004b; 2004d). Interviewing counsellors has less problematic connotations than interviewing clients but in all cases the boundaries needed to be

kept secure and as mentioned above permission was sought from all co-researchers for the data to be included in this dissertation. I did confirm that all of the co-researchers were receiving supervision and had access to a counsellor for personal development if the need arose (McLeod, 2003). I am continuing to maintain contact with the co-researchers in order to ensure that support is available regarding any issues arising from the interviews (McLeod, 2003).

From the moment a piece of research has begun, ethics need to be seriously considered until the moment it is finished. My first task was to produce a Research Proposal which included :

- Aims, objectives, rationale and procedures (see appendix III)
- Advertisement included in the Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal Noticeboard (see appendix IV).
- Information for Co-researchers (see appendix VI).
- Interview Guide (see appendix VII).
- Consent Form (see appendix VIII).

This proposal was approved by the University of Chester Department of Social and Communication Studies Ethics Committee after which I was able to proceed with my research.

## **CONCLUSION**

This appropriately lengthy and detailed chapter in relation to the methodology applied to this research has been necessary in order to fulfill the requirements of the standard of this study. However, no matter how rigorous I have been and how much I have attempted to validate my research or check out my assumptions, I question whether in my search for truth I may discover that it is to some degree inevitably entangled in a web with the tendrils of human fantasy and self deceit.



**PART IV**

**OUTCOMES**

Silence is...the deep well  
From which we can draw living water.  
(Wright, 1997)



## **INDIVIDUAL DEPICTIONS**

### **Introduction**

This section is a significant and important part of the process of heuristic research as it enables the co-researchers to 'remain visible in the examination of the data and continue to be portrayed as whole persons' and 'retains the essence of the person in experience' (Moustakas, 1990 p.39).

I have used the word 'voice' to describe the depiction or profile of each co-researcher. The word voice is poignant and brings me once again to confront the paradoxes present in this study. Ironically it is the voices of the co-researchers that allow the experience of silence to be heard and expressed. My aim is to be as accurate as possible to depict the qualities, constituents, meanings and dimensions of the experience of each co-researcher. I have commenced each co-researcher's depiction with a short verse based on the transcript and an overall impression that I perceived of the person.

## Voices of Co-Researchers

### Co-Researcher Sil.oi.

#### *Light and Life*

Light and life are born  
Like droplets in a stream  
Glimpse of something more  
Awareness is the theme.

The experience of this co-researcher is based on the discipline of spiritual meditation from the perspectives of Roman Catholic, Buddhist and Yoga traditions. By practicing structured times of silence she finds that she receives strength and nourishment, becomes more insightful and has an amplified understanding of self and others, and to some degree lives from the core of her being. Awareness of self, the client and the therapeutic relationship in general are key benefits. She visualizes divine gifts of light and life within being transferred to the client.

*'Focusing on a divine light filling you  
and the life and love of God filling you  
and then you passing that on to others'*

. She recognizes that the power of silent contemplation or meditation is limited and like *'droplets in a stream'*. She perceives that her meditation practices and counselling vocation are separate entities, yet is enabled to give more to her clients and able to let go of her own thoughts more readily because of the practice of meditation.

Her concerns regarding revealing her way of life to others are that the practice of contemplation and meditation are not mainstream and she may be marginalized, judged and not respected. She feels that it is perceived as non-scientific and related to superstition.



*'It is quite nebulous and difficult to subject under scientific scrutiny...  
a hesitation to talk about it  
because we're talking about something that really is difficult to put into words,  
the mystical'.*

To conclude: mindfulness, to **be**, and to be aware are important and significant factors integral to her way of being, received through light and life as a gift of grace.

### **Co-Researcher Sil.oii**

#### ***Diving the Depths***

Deep down in the depths  
Of the clear blue sea  
Clarity presents itself  
Through the mystery.

The choice of Christian contemplative prayer discipline takes this co-researcher away from her busy activities in order to dive the depths of self where she finds clarity and stillness and is able to be in touch with the deepest level of who she is. She is then able to listen at every level more intelligently and actively when working with her clients in a therapeutic relationship. She asks herself the question

*'How do you put interior silence into words?'*

and finds herself using creative imagery. Her creativity is balanced with discipline perceived as a container in order to facilitate her practice of silence. This is utilized in order to tune in to the still small voice of God to hear an insight, a word of wisdom, a pearl or a truth which may emerge and shed light on the present circumstances. She sees her contemplative life and her counselling work as part of the same journey and connected because:

*'my passion is for people's wholeness at every level,  
psychological, spiritual, physical, emotional,...'*

and she sees the silence being the link because she is able to offer that quiet space to her clients. The fact that she practices silence facilitates:

*‘an added dimension, an added edge, an added depth,  
it’s an awareness –  
can bring potential for a deeper space’.*

Her contemplative practice is an integral part of her push to personal development and helps her to get to the heart of who she is. Her completeness for being whole involves reconnection at every level,

*‘connectedness inside yourself, connectedness with other people  
and connectedness to God.’*

### **Co-Researcher Sil.oiii**

#### ***A Deeply Rooted Enduring Sense of Wellbeing.***

Interwoven in her life  
Dance of confidence  
Clarity away from strife  
Sharpens healthy senses.

The life of this co-researcher is rooted in Quakerism and this has provided her with the grounding for the discipline of silence. Her faith journey and counselling journey are interwoven ‘like two ply wool’ and she believes that her silent practice plays an important and significant part within the therapeutic relationship. This facilitates a really crucial part of her person being able to be emotionally healthy and to function at an effective level that she would describe as relational depth. The word clear is consistent for her and is descriptive of the way she benefits from her investment in silence. When she fails to discipline herself she feels as if she is

*‘wading through a messy room full of papers’.*

Her silent times provide her with the space to clear the mess resulting in a real sense of clarity. Yet she has a resentment that in order to achieve that clarity she needs to invest so much of her precious time.

She is also aware of the frustration of finding it difficult to put into words, as language is often inadequate to describe what she is intending to portray. However, she is aware that she has access to something that is incredibly beneficial to herself, but realizes that some clients could feel cut off from this part of her, as it may not mean anything to them. Spirituality and silence may be meaningless or even anathema to them, and whilst she does not discuss this subject with clients, it is part of her way of being and she thinks there could be a loss of potential within the therapeutic relationship and to some degree a sense of separateness.

#### **Co-Research Silo.iv**

##### ***Feeds her Soul***

The buzzards on the wind do soar  
Calling by the sea  
Beyond the crashing and the roar  
Silence is the destiny

Silence for this co-researcher is interspersed in her busy day and she makes use of the many opportunities presented. The essence of her aim is to be still without interference using a variety of rituals. Music and candles are utilized, she watches and listens to the birds in the garden, she sits in the chapel to pray. The essence of what it does for her is that it feeds her soul. She needs to remind herself of her philosophy of silence and how necessary it is for her to stop and be still in order that she can focus on the here and now without being overwhelmed with the frantic busyness and demands imposed on her. She uses her silence constantly as a

preparation before seeing clients so that she does not contaminate the therapeutic relationship with her own agenda or anxieties. She prepares herself for clients so that she can accept whatever happens in the present moment, letting go of the **doing** and embracing the **being**.

Her stillness reminds her and makes her see that she has possibilities to stretch herself and be daring to do something different. It seems to facilitate another level of congruence, daring her to be her own person and to be courageous.

Through her stillness she has discovered that the still small voice that has always been within her is the essence and that that voice is her self. Her counselling room is a reflection of her inner soul, an extension of herself and she ensures that the space is peaceful and respected.

## **GROUP COMPOSITE DEPICTION**

### **Introduction**

This group composite depiction of all four co-researchers is the presentation of the data received from the dialogues with the co-researchers. I have chosen to write the verbatim words of each co-researcher in narrative style using stanzas (Etherington (2004b) in an attempt to capture the impact that the stories of the co-researchers shared. The format for the presentation of verbatim dialogue is that I have used ‘Ma’ to indicate my own input in ordinary type and I have used the stanza format with italics and centred for the co-researchers. The data analysis key words and themes are presented below. This is divided into two sections with four parts in the first section and three parts in the second section (See table ii).

### **Data Analysis Themes**

#### **Section One – Practice and Requirements.**

This section is divided into four parts, and covers the key words and themes in respect of the practice and requirements of silence in the lives of the co-researchers. This section also includes some of the tensions within the practice and it is noted that in spite of some difficulties, all of the co-researchers have chosen this way of life.

#### **Part One**

***Key words and themes:*** *Silence, contemplation, meditation, stillness, to be, emptying, letting go, making space, praying.*

This part is emphasizing how silence is perceived in the lives of the co-researchers. All of the above key words or themes are either interchangeable or at the very least, overlap to some degree. When asked to identify silence and the meaning of this in their lives co-researcher Sil.oiii clarified this:

*I guess meditation is a practice,  
for me it's a practice of sitting down and doing some form of practice  
like watching my breath or repeating a mantra.  
Whereas contemplation is a less structured practice of just being still  
and being with whatever is within me at that point. (Sil.oiii)*

And co-researcher Sil.oi defines her practice:

*...well I suppose I would see what you're talking about as contemplation  
as being another exercise within meditation  
where I would try to empty my mind of thought,  
because this is another exercise in the book I use of watching the thoughts ...  
and letting go of your thoughts.  
And then I would extend that so that you're not trying to not be thinking,  
to be empty of thought  
and then you create the space which God's spirit can fill. (Sil.oi)*

Co-researcher Sil.oiv found that attending the cathedral encouraged her silent prayer:

*...and I started going to the cathedral  
and I really love it and it's really important to me  
and that's encouraged my silence as well in kind of more regular praying. (Sil.oiv)*

Praying with clients in the therapeutic session and for clients as she collects them from reception is part of the practice of Sil.oii. Her perception of making space to experience contemplative prayer is perceived as beyond listening to God and is expressed by co-researcher Sil.oii:

*Setting aside special times that almost gives the flavour of getting still...  
...beyond listening to God into a more contemplative approach,  
which has always been there in me  
but at this point I wanted to make more space for it. (Sil.oii)*

## **Part Two**

**Key words and themes:** *Discipline, Ritual.*

The words discipline and ritual occurred by co-researchers a total of thirteen times throughout the conversations. This appears to be a very meaningful ingredient in order to obtain a degree of silence particularly in the lives of co-researchers Sil.oii and Sil.oiii. I did not use these words as a prompt, they were offered voluntarily.

*There's something about,  
in Quaker worship we follow the discipline of stilling...  
...I mean I've got one (meditation)...  
which is very strict,  
very prescribed,  
which I find very useful  
for when I'm really stressed  
and just need to get my mind focused. (Sil.oiii)*

And co-researcher Sil.oii shares her experience of ritual:

*My personal use of silence is very much in contemplative prayer  
and I try to spend certainly a good twenty minutes in silence every morning as part of  
my Christian prayer discipline...  
...but I do discipline myself to stop at some point and make space... (Sil.oii)*

### **Part Three**

**Key words and themes:** *Spirituality, Soul, Christian, Mysticism.*

Spirituality was at the heart of all of the co-researchers and although from divergent traditions, all professed to have some allegiance to the Christian faith.

When asked the question whether spirituality was a necessary ingredient for the process of silence in their lives and suggested that Dave Mearns claims that he believes spirituality is not necessary, I had a varied response, first from co-researcher Sil.oiv who believes that a person cannot deny spirituality;

*...well we need to define what you mean by spirituality.  
But I can't understand how human beings cannot be spiritual.  
I don't understand how you can't be...  
and I don't think you need to have a religion...  
But I think – he says that you can have all that without being spiritual.  
And I don't know what it is if it's not spiritual. (Sil.oiv)*

And from co-researcher Sil.oiii who believes that it is possible to live without practicing contemplative silence and shares her tensions and frustrations;

*I think I would think 'great' ...  
If I could be like this and not have to sit in silence every morning,  
that would free me up...  
It would give me loads more free time.  
But the fact is for me, my experience,  
is that that is a really crucial part of me being emotionally healthy,  
and able to function at this effective level in relationship.  
It, I mean, part of me not doing it,  
going through phases of not doing it  
is because I really feel angry,  
but I need to do this to feel good in myself...*

Ma     That you need it?

*That I need it, yes.  
Because it's like.  
Yes, Dave Mearns can breeze through his life  
and be a great therapist without having to do this  
and why isn't it like that for me?...  
Which is tied into lack of self acceptance,  
this is who I am and actually,  
this is what I need and if I fight it I won't get anywhere,  
so I try not to.  
There is that frustration.  
(Sil.oiii)*

And co-researcher Sil.oii who also accepts that an atheist could work at a similar level to herself, but for her the connectedness to God is essential.

*...but I guess one's ultimate wholeness incorporates reconnection at every level,  
connectedness inside yourself,  
connectedness with other people you are around  
and also connectedness with God.  
Now in a sense I could and an atheist could work very effectively at some of those  
connections perhaps within oneself, with other people,  
and perhaps there might not be much to choose between us,  
but for me the completeness of being whole  
would involve a connectedness to God. (Sil.oii)*

#### **Part Four**

**Key words and themes:** *Hard to do, Difficult to Explain.*

This part highlights the potential difficulties and paradoxes that the co-researchers have experienced in practicing their silence, in the ability to express it and the effect



that might have on their lives particularly with regard to the therapeutic relationship with their clients. The co-researchers have chosen this way of life and that choice involves many struggles:

*But you're also looking at something that's actually hard to put into words,  
isn't it,  
how do you put interior silence into words? (Sil.oii)*

And:

*You know,  
it's very nebulous,  
it's quite difficult to talk about because  
it's a very nebulous experience. (Sil.oi)*

For co-researcher Sil.oi, there was a concern about attempting to express or even share her experiences with colleagues and particularly with clients:

Ma. Is there a reticence about other people knowing what you do or who you are?

*Yes, I think I have some reticence.  
Because I am concerned that perhaps it won't be respected.  
It might be belittled,  
and because it's quite precious to me  
I don't want to expose myself to that.*

Ma. Almost like a 'coming out'.

*Yes.  
But at the same time I don't want to deny its importance and its value.  
...it's difficult to pinpoint,  
but I think just a general feeling of it being ...  
rather sort of unscientific, I suppose,  
and in general religious experience has been non scientific  
and perhaps a bit related to superstition.*

Ma Not valued.

*Yes, not valued.*

Ma And judged.

Yes.  
And because it is so,  
it is quite nebulous and difficult to subject under scientific scrutiny.  
It's just not, I think, in society in general,  
perhaps that's just my perception...  
And sometimes I have a feeling it's a bit dodgy to talk about it in case it goes.  
It's almost like when you try to define something –  
catch – put it in a box –  
then you might lose it.

Ma     A kind of hesitation

Yes,  
there is a hesitation... (Sil.oi)

There was no denial of the effort and hard work that is involved in maintaining the practices that the co-researchers shared. After explaining her daily routine, co-researcher Sil.oiii went on to say:

*Yes, and it's just hard, hard work. (Sil.oiii)*

And later on in the conversation sharing her concern about her connectedness to clients, and her perception of how the practice of silence may even produce a loss of potential in the therapeutic relationship, she struggled to balance that tension, and said:

*...if somebody was saying to me how,  
you seem really grounded,  
how do you do that,  
what do you do to get there...  
my response would be to talk about silence, meditation and faith, but that doesn't  
mean anything to some people.  
So there's a feeling that I've got something that I find incredibly beneficial  
yet for other people it doesn't mean anything  
so somehow...  
they're kind of cut off from it because it doesn't mean anything to them.  
...Sometimes I feel like I've got access to something  
that other people don't have access to...  
because it doesn't mean anything to them,  
the whole concept of spirituality or silence  
and therefore, there's a kind of loss of potential or something. (Sil.oiii)*

## Data Analysis Themes

### Section Two – Impact of silence on the co-researcher and the therapeutic relationship.

This section is divided into three parts and covers emerging key themes that were advantageous to the co-researcher, or enhanced their person and/or therapeutic relationship as a result of the practice of silence.

#### Part One

**Key words and themes:** *Relational Depth, Congruence, Grounded and Self Growth.*

The phrase ‘relational depth’ did not occur during the conversations with the co-researchers but after reflection one of the co-researchers contacted me with her thoughts and shared that this phrase fitted perfectly her experience. However, the word depth did occur a total of sixteen times. Metaphors and images were used particularly to describe the concept of depth or relational depth. Co-researcher Sil.oiii uses the metaphors of a lake and of the ocean;

*And I've also done yoga  
and we had some teacher who...  
taught from a Hindu perspective about meditation,  
and I remember one of the things that she said  
was that the mind is like a lake,  
and that thoughts are waves on the lake,  
and that when we sit in meditation,  
the waves calm and we can see much deeper into the lake,  
and that God is at the bottom of the lake. ...  
And... I relate really well to that concept,  
that helps me make sense of the different states that I'm in,  
both the flustered, can't cope, kind of state that I get into when I'm not doing  
contemplative silence regularly,  
and why it makes such a difference to do it. ...  
So when I spend time in contemplation,  
that really does help me get in touch with that kind of –  
it's a more deeply rooted enduring sense of well being.  
That's the spiritual aspect –  
it's like that Julian of Norwich thing that 'All will be well'.  
... I get below,*

*like the waves on the ocean...  
Then deeper down...  
at this level everything is ok and you are ok,  
you're fine just as you are. (Sil.oiii)*

Co-researcher Sil.oii describes briefly how her experience adds depth to herself and the therapeutic relationship:

*...personally, my way of silence is,  
that's part of who I am and what I bring.  
And I think perhaps it gives an added dimension,  
an added edge, an added depth,  
it's an awareness –  
can bring potential for a deeper space.  
...an added dimension. (Sil.oii)*

The concept of being grounded is closely linked to the depth of relationship, and so in conversation with co-researcher Sil.oiii, we discussed her experience of how dance created a silent space;

Ma As you were talking then about the dance and about your experience with that client, it struck me that it might have been some extra confidence. Is that right?

*Yes, yes.*

Ma I was just... wondering, because as you spoke – you had a sort of, 'I was so clear' as if you were confident. Something more...

*Yes, definitely.  
There's definitely something about self acceptance and confidence [within the  
therapeutic relationship] when I'm in this grounded state. (Sil.oiii)*

When a greater level of self acceptance and being grounded was in place, it was noted from the perception of co-researcher Sil.oiii that the therapeutic relationship was enhanced.

The word congruence was used a total of nine times by co-researchers, and one experience from co-researcher Sil.oiv is explored here;

Ma     So there's a confidence, a courage:

*Yes. It enables me to be courageous, yes.*

Ma     Daring you.

*Daring me to be me.*

*Yes...*

*I really value peoples' honesty and congruence,  
and my congruence is essential for me in my life in all that I do.*

*And I think if I strive for anything,  
it's to be... congruent in the moment, [with myself and my clients]  
to be me in the moment as much as I can...*

*But essentially my stillness enables my congruence.*

*That's it! (Sil.oiv)*

Once again, it was pointed out that with a greater level of self confidence, co-researcher Sil.oiv was able to be more congruent with her clients.

Self growth or self development is intrinsically linked to being grounded and facilitates more depth of self and relationships. One example is from the Buddhist tradition shared by co-researcher Sil.oi;

*And for them [Buddhists] it is about self development of the full potential, I think.*

*The development of the Buddha self which is the compassionate self.*

*So if I look at those people that I meditate with I see,...*

*well it seems to me that they are better people for that practice,  
and that they are able to give more as a result of that practice... (Sil.oi)*

Here we see that co-researcher Sil.oi is suggesting that, similarly to her peers who are Buddhists, she is also able to give more to the therapeutic relationship due to her practice of meditation.

## **Part Two**

**Key words and themes:** *Mindfulness, Awareness, Listening, Centred/Focused, Insight, Intuition, Clarity, Light and Life.*

Considering that space is at a premium and with so much rich material in this section I have needed to carefully choose selective examples of the above key words that represent the whole picture. Although the word mindfulness only occurred five times during the conversations I think that this main theme covers adequately all of the other sub themes in this part. Co-researcher Sil.oiv states that as a result of her practice of silence she is able to be mindful:

*...To be mindful, to be mindful of others.  
And to be me, to be who I am.  
You know to value who I am.  
To make the most of who I am,  
... to do my best in whatever I'm doing...  
My interpretation of being Christian is trying to be mindful of others  
and do the best I can... (Sil.oiv)*

And the importance of self-awareness was stressed by co-researcher Sil.oi:

*...I think you have more self-awareness,  
yes and more awareness of the client,  
and just sort of, a little bit of detachment almost...*

Ma. So you're more aware of all of that (therapeutic) process going on.

*Yes, the process.(Sil.oi)*

When I asked the question about the difference that an input of silent times had in their lifestyle, and hence would be reflected in the therapeutic relationship, co-researcher Sil.oiii emphasized the word clarity;

Ma     So what is the difference?

*So, yes, I feel a lot clearer in myself,  
there's a kind of real feeling,  
a real state of being that I get into which I really struggle to put into words,  
but I mean, one word that is consistently there is **clear**.  
I just feel **clear** in myself.  
When I don't... spend time in silence regularly,  
I can feel like I'm really full up with stuff.  
A bit like a room that's full of papers and they're all over the place...  
Whereas when I'm in –  
when I'm using silence regularly,  
it's like everything becomes ordered  
and there's more space and I can access.  
I'm much more clearer in my thinking and I can –  
I function much better.  
If I need to do something I can think more clearly about...  
and it just seems more easy.  
And... if I've not been in silence for a while,  
I can be trying to focus on one task,  
and then all these other things that I've got to do will kind of,  
crowding in and it's just really hard to order my thoughts  
and I can feel a bit like I'm wading through mud sometimes.*

Ma     Does that reflect in your practice – you say you are more emotionally clear, does that mean that you can see your client, that there's something more clear in your client, or is it just you?

*I find it easier to determine what emotions are mine  
and what emotions are the client's.  
So that's clearer,  
that kind of sense of something going on and where does it come from.  
And yes, I'm just a lot sharper. (Sil.oiii)*

Listening is a theme that emerged consistently and co-researcher Sil.oii used the metaphor of tuning in to a radio, then later shared one of her experiences of how her practice of silence enhanced her listening, intuition and insight:

*Except that –  
tuning into things during the session,  
and often having to come back so that I can keep listening,  
coming back.  
Although I do intervene and talk as well.  
And there's also what happens afterwards,  
when I write up some notes,  
I have a place for afterthoughts,  
and sometimes just in the writing, and reflecting,*

*I'll get to the afterthoughts,  
and just something pops up that I wasn't even thinking about in the session,  
or aware of, that just comes together,  
and feel that's something about trying to be listening  
and tuned in that perhaps things are coming  
that don't actually surface in your conscious mind until later  
and makes sense then,  
but you've registered them somehow,  
you've absorbed them,  
but you haven't actually formulated what they're about...  
...but sometimes, things happen,  
and I think 'oh I didn't realize I thought that'.  
Or, sort of insight comes.  
(Sil.oii)*

Co-researcher Sil.oi recognizes the concept of light and life being passed on from herself to clients;

*So there's lots of different meditations...  
for different purposes...  
...particularly for focusing on helping others,  
...so you would focus on a divine light filling you  
and the life and the love of God filling you  
and then you passing that on to others.  
So that is one I use for my clients all the time. (Sil.oi)*

### **Part Three**

**Key words and themes:** *Acceptance, I'm OK, Love and Compassion.*

This main theme of acceptance incorporates the concept of 'I'm OK', and love and compassion for self and others. In one conversation with co-researcher Sil.oiv we explored how her stillness prepared her to be accepting of herself and of what may happen in the therapeutic hour.

*...if I'm prepared,  
and my stillness prepares me,  
then I think I'm more accepting of what happens,  
what's going on.*



Ma And ready for that.

*And ready, oh yes.  
Ready for that.  
and it's something that kind of,  
I embrace...  
it's my philosophy,  
and I tell it, I teach it.  
But if I'm not careful,  
if I get wrapped in the busyness...  
When I'm rushing,  
when I'm not still and haven't done my stillness  
I can get into the bit of me that says I'm not OK,  
I'm a bit of a fraud really,  
what am I doing here with this client,  
I can't really do this can I?  
It kind of brings up my anxieties,  
and that overflows into all my work in whatever I do...  
...but if I remember my stillness,  
the still small voice says 'it's ok – you're ok',  
and I need to remember that. (Sil.oiv)*

The theme of love and compassion in the counselling process is of paramount importance and without any prompt from me these words were used by two of the co-researchers. I was in no doubt and aware that all of the co-researchers had these qualities. Co-researcher Sil.oiii likened the Person-centred approach to that of Christ and recognizes the distortions of the church and social expectations:

*...being a bit like loving people in the way that Christ said,  
which also involves loving ourselves.  
It's not just about doing good things for other people.  
It's also about doing things for ourselves.*

Ma Loving ourselves properly, in order that we can. It's one of the distortions of the church over the centuries.

*Yes, absolutely, yes.  
It's about doing things for everyone else.(Sil.oiii)*

In a conversation with co-researcher Sil.oi, she related the concept of love in to the Buddhist tradition:

Ma ....so as you are becoming, the more you meditate, the more you become more centred, ... then you as this person...are able to come into the counselling room being that **more** person. Is that?

*Yes, you're right.*

*An important thing which occurred to me while you were speaking,  
there's an importance within the Buddhist tradition of self-love,  
compassion towards the self which is very important and which is ,  
tends to be, can be a bit absent in the Christian tradition.  
It depends how you interpret it (Sil.oi).*

This concept of becoming is an essential element for the counsellor particularly within the philosophy of Person-centred counselling. As the counsellor 'becomes' they are able to be more effective in the therapeutic relationship and allow the client to discover within themselves their own person (Rogers, 1961).

## CONCLUSION

I trust that I have expressed the reality and the essence of the experience of the conversations I had with the co-researchers as closely as possible. However, many of the key themes and depictions could be placed in different categories. I am also aware that the themes and depictions do overlap considerably and there are levels of thoughts and expressions which overlay each other.

Finally two of the co-researchers Sil.oi and Sil.oiv share poignant ways of describing advantages of spending time in silence which emphasize the important aspects of looking after the self when in the role of counsellor:

*So this is the way that I am nourished...(Sil.oi)*

*...I think what it does for me is feeds my soul.  
My silence feeds my soul.(Sil.oiv)*

## **CREATIVE SYNTHESIS**

I have chosen to write my creative synthesis in the form of a poem primarily because I have always found poetry the easiest way to express myself in this style, but also because the whole concept of silence leaves me wondering how to use words to describe experiences of no words. Poetry is often thought of as the language of the soul and this seems to me to be quite apt in the circumstances particularly relating it to heuristic research.

## **Silent Voices**

When time is taken to create a special space  
And silence and stillness reign supreme  
Letting go and emptying the drama of the day  
Considering essential ritual and routine

You may dive the depths of the deep blue oceans  
To discover the self in a more profound way  
Awareness and listening at every level  
Insights and intuition conveyed

Then clarity will be your companion  
Tuned in to this esteemed paradigm  
Imperturbably confident in the moment  
Pursuing congruence as a sign

Yet do not expect this life to be easy  
For tensions and paradoxes lurk in the shadows  
Frustrations abound when we hear of others  
Floating on the surface or in the shallows

Professing to find it unnecessary  
To spend precious time in the discipline  
How can comparisons ever be fruitful  
If ever dogmatic assumptions begin

Perceptions and judgements of being devalued  
May chain you and keep you locked into your prison  
Yet we all have a right to become transparent  
And to love life without any sense of restriction

Love and compassion now known as expression  
Abandoning notoriety of ancient days  
Developing proliferation of self acceptance  
Immanent discovery in many ways.

The silent voices are incredibly mindful  
Distinguishing truth from any deceit  
The mystical key lies hidden in the concepts  
Contemplation and meditation make it complete.

Gathering together discoveries of meaning  
Escorting the counselling space each day  
Person and process of therapy transforming  
The impact of silence knows its own way. (MRH)

**PART V**

**DISCUSSION**

‘The unexamined life is not worth living’.  
(Socrates)



## **ORGANIZING THE LITERATURE SEARCH AND THE DATA ANALYSIS**

To assist the organization of this discussion I searched through the literature chapter to find key words and themes. I listed the key words and themes noting whether I found them in books, journal articles or in research papers, not counting the number of times a particular key word or theme was mentioned. I then proceeded to create a literature search findings table (see table iii) to compare the commonalities with and divergences from the data analysis. Organizing the comparison of the literature findings and the data analysis was a complex task. The presentation of this is based primarily on the key words and themes found in the literature. Some of the key words and themes are different from those in the data analysis and some presented in a different order. Section one lists the practice and requirements of contemplative silence. In the second section I listed the impact that the practice of silence has on the co-researcher, the client and the therapeutic relationship. Section three notes the data analysis not found in the literature search. Tables ii and iii will help the reader to evaluate the comparisons of the literature search and the data analysis presented in this study.

## COMPARISONS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND LITERATURE SEARCH

### Commonalities

#### Section one -Practice and requirements

**Key words and themes:** *Silence; contemplation, meditation, stillness, to be, praying,, spirituality, soul, Christian, mysticism.*

In this first section of the practice of silence and the requirements of the counsellor who practices contemplative silence, all of the key words or themes were found in some of the books, journal articles and research papers as well as in the dialogues with the co-researchers.

There are two strands running in parallel within the counselling arena regarding the subjects of silence, contemplation, meditation, stillness and **being**. On the one hand some writers profess that these are intrinsically linked to spirituality (Gubi, 2001, 2002, 2004; Lynch, 1998; McLeod, 1998; Thorne, 2000, 2002; West, 1998a,1998b, 2000, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2003) whilst Josellson (1996) and Mearns (1997) do not make that allegiance. Spirituality is an essential part of therapeutic work declared Brian Thorne in a conversation with myself. This is re-iterated extensively in his writings (Thorne, 2000, 2002) where he connects the subject of mysticism to the therapeutic relationship. In contrast, Mearns (1997) believes that to add the word spiritual to the experience of something happening at a deep level within the silence, is to thwart the experience and not allow something of an even deeper level to occur. The personal opinion of Rogers' (1958) perception of silence is not clear. He is known to have oscillated throughout his life between a belief based on Christianity and of dismissing any spiritual element in therapy. The question remains as to



whether Carl Rogers' intuitive faculty was in fact rooted in his original faith. He did, in the last ten years of his life profess an element of spirituality (Rogers, 1986).

The experiences of the co-researchers reflect to some degree that of the literature study. Co-researcher Sil.oiv believes that spirituality is part of being human and that if that is denied, then part of our humanity is denied. Co-researchers Sil.oii and Sil.oiii accepted that it may be possible to work at the same depth of therapeutic relationship when a person excludes spirituality and/or silence in their lives, but at the same time recognized that it was a necessary ingredient in their own lives and practice. It is important to note here that all of the co-researchers were practicing some form of spirituality or religion. Silence within the therapeutic relationship is often perceived as prayer (Gubi, 2001, 2002, 2004). This reflects the experience of co-researcher Sil.oii who prays for her clients in the quiet period as she collects them from reception and in the silent times within the therapeutic hour.

***Key words and themes:*** *Difficult to explain/ prejudice.*

This theme was found in all types of literature, common to two of the co-researchers' experiences. Williams (2003) suggests that spirituality is prejudiced against in the counselling arena as does Gubi (2002) who advocates that prayer is worthy of recognition when working with spirituality in the therapeutic relationship. Jenkins (2004) states that mental health patients are vulnerable to prejudice when disclosing their allegiance to spirituality. Foskett (2003) contests Williams' (2003) paper pointing out the danger of including spirituality or religion to the counselling arena without thought for individual or unique experiences of the counsellor or the client. West (1998a) notes that spirituality is not an easy subject to discuss and Baker (1995)

clearly indicates that to understand the practice of silent contemplation is an arduous task and difficult to put into words. Reticence to share her own experience of contemplation and meditation with other counsellors was expressed by co-researcher Sil.oi for fear of prejudice or being disrespected and was described as a ‘coming out’ experience. She also found this hard to put into words describing it as a very nebulous experience (Sil.oi). The salient question was raised by co-researcher Sil.oii ‘How do you put interior silence into words?’

***Key words and themes:*** *Making space, discipline and ritual, hard to do.*

These themes were found in books, research papers and within the experience of the co-researchers. Baker (1995) writes in detail about the discipline of setting aside times to spend in silence. Studies by Goehring (1995) and Finney & Malony (1985) recognize that contemplative silence is a discipline and an attention on God. Although the participants in the study undertaken by Page et al. (1997) note that the six month experience of a silent retreat was worthwhile, it was recognized as a struggle. Three of the co-researchers practice structured times of silence in the form of contemplation or meditation (Sil.oi; Sil.oii; Sil.oiii) and one co-researcher (Sil.oiv) practices a more flexible and spontaneous discipline depending on the circumstance, environment and availability of resources within a busy working day. All of the co-researchers agree that ritual and discipline that take effort are necessary.

**Section Two - Impact of Silence on the co-researcher and the therapeutic relationship.**

***Key words and themes:*** *Relational depth; congruence, grounded/connectedness, self growth/healing.*

All of the above key words or themes were found in books, journal articles and research papers apart from congruence found only in books. All were found in some of the co-researchers' experiences. Relational depth is a subject explored in detail by Mearns (1997), Thorne (2000, 2002), Josellson (1996), Harries (2002) and Spinelli (1994). From the perspective of the co-researchers Sil.oiii was the only one who used the term 'relational depth' in her work with clients whilst two shared their experience of depth using the metaphor of water expressed as a well (Sil.oii) or the ocean (Sil.oiii).

For the counsellor to be grounded is an important aspect that influences the therapeutic relationship and Gubi (2001) reports that participants in his research found that silent prayer increased their level of groundedness and connectedness. Co-researcher Sil.oii shared her sense of connectedness to herself, God and her clients as a result of the practice of silence.

A greater sense of integrity and truth was reported by West (1998a) from the participants of his study of Quakers who are psychotherapists and congruence was an important aspect that co-researcher Sil.oiv found to have a significant impact upon herself and the therapeutic relationship, resulting from her practice of stillness.

Self growth and healing is noted as one of the benefits in Gubi's (2004) research paper on the subject of prayer. This theme is also supported by Chopra (1994) in his book relating to the journey towards fulfillment of spirituality. This is a common theme for all of the co-researchers and Sil.oi shares that her meditation facilitates her self development to the full potential thus enabling her to be more effective as a counsellor.

***Key words and themes:*** *Mindfulness, awareness, listening, centred/focused, insight, intuition, clarity, light and wisdom.*

The word mindfulness only appeared in one journal article (Pointon, 2005), yet it could be argued that awareness describes a similar theme. This is an important aspect resulting from participants spending six months on a silent retreat (Page et al., 1997). The themes of increased mindfulness and awareness within the therapeutic relationship were stressed by both co-researchers Sil.oi and Sil.oiv as a result of their discipline of silent times.

Listening is a theme researched by Goehring (1995) in his paper about prayer and is written about by Mearns (1994), Mearns & Thorne (1988), Rogers (1951,1961) and Rogers & Stevens (1967). Listening was one of the key aspects shared in the dialogue with co-researcher Sil.oii who talked about 'tuning in' in order to listen more fully. This, she believes, enhances her skills in the therapeutic relationship.

Insight and intuition are closely linked to listening and these are aspects resulting from prayer, which includes contemplative silent prayer explored by Gubi (2004). West (1998a) reports that his participants found that a greater level of insight and

intuition were a result of their silent practice and the participants of the six month silent retreat noted that insight was an apparent benefit (Page et al., 1997). In parallel these themes are noted by both co-researchers Sil.oi who perceives insight as a divine gift and Sil.oii who believes that insight comes from her deeper level of listening. In both of these instances, the impact is directly linked to their practice of contemplation and meditation and impacts on their therapeutic work.

Being centred and focused are themes found in books, journal articles and research papers. This subject is closely related to the concept of clarity and can be found in books and research papers. As a result of counsellors making use of silent prayer it is posited by Gubi (2004) to induce clarity in the therapeutic relationship. West (1998a) also notes that the Quakers in his study reported an added clarity to their counselling work. Co-researcher Sil.oi practices her meditation centring exercise in order to become focused in her work whilst co-researcher Sil.oiii sees clarity resulting from her discipline of making space thus reducing her 'mental messiness'. She feels really sharp and notices the difference in her work with clients.

The themes of light and wisdom were found to be a benefit of the participants in a study of prayer including silent prayer by Gubi (2004) and in the research that West (1998a) undertook interviewing Quakers. Co-researcher Sil.oi shared her experience of being full of light and life as a result of her contemplation and meditation practice. She said that she was able to pass this on to her clients although in small measure 'like droplets in a stream' (Sil.oi).

***Key words and themes: Inhibits therapy.***

The concept that the practice of silent contemplation and meditation may inhibit therapy is worth noting under a separate single heading. Ladany et al. (2004) posit that silence is a powerful tool that can facilitate or inhibit therapeutic work. He believes that silence in the counselling room may be intimidating to the client. Another danger to be aware of is that when a period of silence or stillness is experienced in the counselling relationship this may be perceived by the client that the counsellor is absent (Rose, 2002). The ethos of the counsellor who lives with contemplative silence was a concern for co-researcher Sil.oiii. She stated her own tension within the therapeutic relationship and recognized that even if the client did not overtly know facts regarding the counsellor's life, there could be a loss of potential within the therapeutic relationship because the client may feel alienated and not understand the counsellor's way of being or underlying philosophy.

## **Divergences from Units of Meaning in Data Analysis**

### **Section One – Practice and Requirements**

In this section key words and phrases are noted within the literature search that have not been addressed by the co-researchers.

***Key words and themes: Boundaries.***

In order that the therapeutic relationship is ethical, keeping clear boundaries is of utmost importance. Yet, none of the co-researchers raised this issue. Being fully present, connected and fully participating in the space between yet not losing boundaries is perceived to be an encounter when something deep and healing takes place (Josellson, 1996; Harries, 2002; Spinelli, 1994). However, Rowan (2004) warns

that boundaries may fall away. As discussed in the literature search, there is a danger of merging roles in certain circumstances: General Practitioners who slip into the role of counsellor when dealing with patients who are dying (Murray et al., 2003), becoming a Priest to a client when spirituality is on the agenda (Worsley, 2000) and stepping into the role of Spiritual Director rather than counsellor (West, 2002) are all very subtle dangers that can impair the therapeutic process.

**Section Two – Impact of silence on the Co-researcher, the client and the Therapeutic Relationship.**

***Key words and themes:*** Accelerate therapy, empathize, facilitate reflection and expression of feelings, presence, beyondness,

To accelerate the therapeutic process is claimed by Rogers (1958) to be one result of using silence appropriately by the counsellor and Ladany et al. (2004) recognize that silence can be facilitative for the client. The core condition of empathy is believed to be facilitated by silence and stillness (Ladany et al., 2004; Mearns, 1994; Mearns & Thorne, 1988; Rogers, 1951, 1961; Rogers & Stevens, 1967; West, 1998a). Empathy was a theme noticeably absent from the conversations with the co-researchers, although Sil.oii comprehensively addressed the closely related aspect of listening. The theme of beyondness was not acknowledged by the co-researchers, but Sil.oi did express her experience of ‘something more’ happening in the counselling relationship. Lynch (1998) discusses his understanding of moving beyond words and language into the world of silence and the quality of presence is also acknowledged by Baker (1995), Buber (1958), Josellson (1996), Spinelli (1994), West (1998a) and Worsley (2000). Silence was perceived by the counsellor as a facilitator for clients to reflect

and express feelings (Ladany et al., 2004) yet these concepts were not mentioned by the co-researchers.

***Key words and themes:*** *Client perceived rapport, higher scores on the outcome measure, inner strength and empowering the client, builds trust, client feels supported and understood.*

Data analyzed by Sharpley (1997) revealed that silence during counselling sessions is associated with client-perceived rapport and higher scores on the outcome measure. Building trust is an important element in the counselling process and Ladany et al. (2004) found in his research that as a result of counsellors educating their clients about how to use silence they were helped to trust their therapists and that similarly to West (1998a) clients felt supported and understood. Yet it is also noted that Ladany et al. (2004) recognize the need for a sound therapeutic alliance as a prerequisite for using silence. This theme is noted by Gubi (2004) in his study of prayer in relation to counselling. He reports that inner strength and empowering and greater connection with the client and self result from prayer which includes contemplative silence. Whilst co-researcher Sil.oii and Sil.oiii shared their experiences of a deeper connection with self and clients, this was not perceived to have empowered the client in the same way. In relation to being supported and understood, as discussed earlier, co-researcher Sil.oiii found that her way of being could be inhibiting to the therapeutic relationship and none of the co-researchers shared the experience of clients being supported and understood as a result of their silent practice, or had considered specifically educating their clients in the use of silence.



**Section Three - Divergences. Themes in the Data Analysis not found in the Literature Search.**

*Key words and themes: Acceptance, I'm OK, love and compassion.*

In this section I draw attention to the core condition known as unconditional positive regard. This is a markedly absent theme within the literature yet from the conversations with the co-researchers, the practice of silence in the form of contemplation or meditation resulted in a significant shift in their perception of self acceptance. Co-researcher Sil.oi related her understanding of love and compassion to her Buddhist meditation whilst co-researcher Sil.oiii perceived this in a Christ like way. The practice of stillness was the facilitator for co-researcher Sil.oiv to use the term 'I'm OK' and to be accepting of herself, her clients and the therapeutic process.

## **REVIEW OF DISCUSSION**

Emerging commonalities and divergences of the literature search and the data analysis were found to be in equal proportion and I close this discussion with a brief synopsis. For the sake of clarity if the reader wishes to compare the data analysis key words and themes of the co-researchers with the key words and themes found in the literature see tables ii and iii.

The contentious area of whether spirituality is an integral part of silence was a common theme widely debated within the literature and dialogues with the co-researchers. Recognition that to practice silent contemplation or meditation is not only difficult to put into words or explain, but it was agreed that a rigorous discipline was required. This was agreed within the data collected from co-researchers and literature. Prejudice was raised by both co-researchers and literature and it was also agreed that silence within the counselling relationship may have a positive or negative impact. Clear boundaries (Murray et al., 2003; Worsley, 2000) and education of the client (Williams, 2003) were issues addressed in the literature yet not specifically raised by co-researchers.

Co-researchers reported that when contemplative silence was practiced they experienced a greater level of the core condition of unconditional positive regard under the headings of 'acceptance', I'm OK and love and compassion that impacted on themselves and the therapeutic relationship. This did not appear in the literature. In parallel the core condition of empathy appeared in the literature but not in the experiences of the co-researchers.

In conclusion I have expressed as accurately as possible the words and themes within the literature and within the dialogues with co-researchers as they have been presented. I leave the reader to consider the information carefully and to draw their own conclusions.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research study is part of the genesis of a contemporary paradigm being embraced into the counselling environment. More comprehensive research may need to be considered in order to examine a wider field of counsellors who have chosen to live with silence and to investigate the impact, if any, that this has on the therapeutic relationship.

Research is being undertaken that is attempting to understand why it is that when a person practices contemplation or meditation, focusing attention is increased, the sense of time seems to be changed and physical changes occur in the brain (Lancaster, 2004). Yet there is a paucity of research and of theoretical and empirical literature on the impact that contemplative silence or meditation has on the therapeutic relationship.

Specific further research with a larger and more comprehensive sample in relation to counsellors who commit themselves to silence would be beneficial. Ideally a larger sample would encompass co-researchers with divergent philosophies and backgrounds, both male and female and from different cultures. Furthermore, it would be particularly poignant to research the perspective of clients in order to gain an insight into whether they believe that this way of being of the counsellor has an impact on the counselling relationship.

In addition although silence is an integral part of the Personal Development Group within the counselling training arena, this is often considered a difficult area to deal with. Research into whether contemplation is a subject to be 'taught' within

counselling training would provide useful information for the development of counselling training and practice.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Working within the parameters of this small scale research project, there are a number of limitations to consider.

All four co-researchers were female and had a background of some form of religion or spirituality. This limited the outcomes of the co-researchers to exclude any male influence or atheist experiences.

The result of this heuristic study is limited to the perceptions of counsellors own experiences.

Being the sole analyst I considered my own biases and expectations rigorously throughout the process. A more comprehensive study involving more than one researcher in the analytical process would more fully eliminate the risk of assumptions, expectations or misinterpretation.

I did not intend to diminish possibilities by restricting my time too harshly and have found that flexibility with time constraints has enabled me to be uncompromising with my standard of work. However, there were deadlines and time was of the essence.

Finances relating to travelling expenses and days away from work in order to undertake this study have proved costly, resources being limited.

## **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS**

Concluding this study on the subject of contemplative silence and the impact that may have on the therapeutic relationship, I notice that it is a reflection of myself. This is the truth of how four co-researchers and myself perceive the world yet I am also aware that there is so much that has not been included in this study due to limitations.

This is where the study and I part, but not for long. I will continue to have a never ending conversation with myself continually questioning not only my practice of silent contemplation, but my religious beliefs. I appreciate my involvement within the church where I can discuss my way of being openly and where I find the space to revel in the paradoxes and the existential questions. My intention is to maintain this work and to undertake further research or other writings and to continue the investigation of the phenomenon of silence within the counselling arena.

It is noticeable that in our fast, noisy, Western post-modern society, as we are inundated with words either written or spoken imposed upon us on a daily basis, this world is distinctly silent about the enigma of silence.



**PART VI**

**REFERENCES**  
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Learn to be silent.  
Let your quiet mind listen and absorb.  
(Pythagorus)





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**Table ii**

**DATA ANALYSIS TABLE**

**Section One – Practice and Requirements**

| <b>Key words and themes</b>           | <b>Sil.oi</b> | <b>Sil.oii</b> | <b>Sil.oiii</b> | <b>Sil.oiv</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>SILENCE</b>                        | 6             | 11             | 16              | 19             | 52           |
| Contemplation                         | 1             | 4              | 6               | 0              | 11           |
| Meditation                            | 31            | 0              | 9               | 2              | 42           |
| Stillness                             | 1             | 4              | 3               | 21             | 29           |
| To BE                                 | 1             | 0              | 2               | 0              | 3            |
| Emptying                              | 2             | 0              | 2               | 0              | 4            |
| Letting go                            | 3             | 3              | 2               | 0              | 8            |
| Praying                               | 6             | 7              | 0               | 10             | 23           |
| Making space                          | 0             | 13             | 2               | 9              | 24           |
| <b>DISCIPLINE and RITUAL</b>          | 3             | 3              | 2               | 5              | 13           |
| <b>SPIRITUALITY, SOUL, CHRISTIAN.</b> | 8             | 9              | 9               | 9              | 35           |
| Mysticism                             | 2             | 0              | 0               | 0              | 2            |
| <b>HARD TO DO</b>                     | 8             | 1              | 4               | 0              | 13           |
| Difficult to explain                  | 4             | 1              | 1               | 0              | 6            |

**Section Two – Impact of Silence on the Co-researcher and the Therapeutic Relationship**

| <b>Key words and themes</b> | <b>Sil.oi</b> | <b>Sil.oii</b> | <b>Sil.oiii</b> | <b>Sil.oiv</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>RELATIONAL DEPTH</b>     | 0             | 9              | 7               | 0              | 16           |
| Congruence                  | 1             | 0              | 2               | 9              | 12           |
| Grounded/connectedness      | 3             | 9              | 4               | 0              | 16           |
| Self growth/healing         | 1             | 4              | 5               | 4              | 14           |
| <b>MINDFULNESS</b>          | 1             | 0              | 0               | 4              | 5            |
| Awareness                   | 13            | 1              | 2               | 0              | 16           |
| Listening                   | 0             | 8              | 1               | 1              | 10           |
| Centred/focused             | 8             | 0              | 4               | 1              | 13           |
| Insight                     | 3             | 3              | 0               | 0              | 6            |
| Intuition                   | 0             | 2              | 0               | 1              | 3            |
| Clarity                     | 0             | 1              | 12              | 0              | 13           |
| Light and life              | 9             | 1              | 3               | 0              | 13           |
| <b>ACCEPTANCE</b>           | 0             | 0              | 2               | 6              | 8            |
| I'm ok                      | 0             | 0              | 4               | 17             | 21           |
| Love & compassion           | 5             | 0              | 0               | 2              | 7            |

**Table iii**

**LITERATURE SEARCH FINDINGS**

**Key words and themes**

**Section One – Practice and Requirements**

| <b>COMMONALITIES WITH<br/>DATA ANALYSIS</b> | <b>Books</b> | <b>Journal Articles</b> | <b>Research Papers</b> |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Silence</b>                              | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Contemplation                               | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Meditation                                  | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Stillness                                   | *            | *                       | *                      |
| To BE                                       | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Praying                                     | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Making Space                                | *            |                         | *                      |
| <b>Discipline and ritual</b>                | *            |                         | *                      |
| <b>Spirituality, soul,. Christian</b>       | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Mysticism                                   | *            |                         | *                      |
| Hard to do                                  | *            |                         | *                      |
| Difficult to explain/prejudice              | *            | *                       | *                      |
| <b>DIVERGENCES FROM<br/>DATA ANALYSIS</b>   |              |                         |                        |
| Boundaries                                  | *            | *                       | *                      |



**TABLE iii continued**

**LITERATURE SEARCH FINDINGS**

**Section Two – Impact of Silence on the Co-researcher, the client and the Therapeutic Relationship**

| <b>COMMONALITIES WITH DATA ANALYSIS</b>          | <b>Books</b> | <b>Journal Articles</b> | <b>Research Papers</b> |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Relational depth</b>                          | *            |                         | *                      |
| Congruence/integrity/truth                       |              |                         | *                      |
| Grounded/connectedness                           | *            |                         | *                      |
| Self growth/healing                              | *            |                         | *                      |
| <b>Mindfulness</b>                               |              | *                       |                        |
| Awareness  | *            |                         | *                      |
| Listening  | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Centred/focused                                  | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Insight  | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Intuition  |              |                         | *                      |
| Clarity  | *            |                         | *                      |
| Light and wisdom                                 | *            |                         | *                      |
| Inhibits therapy                                 | *            |                         | *                      |
| <b>DIVERGENCES FROM DATA ANALYSIS</b>            |              |                         |                        |
| Accelerate therapy                               | *            |                         | *                      |
| Empathize  | *            |                         | *                      |
| Presence   | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Beyondness                                       | *            | *                       | *                      |
| Client perceived rapport                         |              |                         | *                      |
| Higher scores on the outcome measure             |              |                         | *                      |
| Facilitate reflection and expression of feelings |              |                         | *                      |
| Inner strength                                   |              |                         | *                      |
| Empowering the client                            |              |                         |                        |
| Builds trust                                     |              |                         | *                      |
| Client feels supported and understood            |              |                         | *                      |

**Section Three**

|   |
|---|
| <b>DIVERGENCES DATA ANALYSIS NOT FOUND IN LITERATURE SEARCH</b> |
| Acceptance  |
| I'm OK  |
| Love and compassion   |



## **APPENDIX III**

### **AIMS, OBJECTIVES, RATIONALE AND PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT**

‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study.’

The phenomenon of silence is at the cutting edge of the counselling world, and I am attempting to research this phenomenon using heuristic methodology, holding together in tension the rigour of academic discipline, and the subjectivity of this form of research. It is the mystery of the space between, the glimpsing of that elusive aspect, which cannot be grasped, in the midst of opposite poles in tension, which fascinates me.

In asking this existential question, and taking into account my life experiences and particularly my own perceptions and discoveries, which are an essential element in the initial steps of the research process, I hope to question the assumptions of the Post-modern Western culture.

I am intending to invite a minimum of four and a maximum of eight counsellors for in-depth interviews with minimal structure. The criteria would be that the participants would need to be counsellors who have chosen to live with a significant amount of contemplative silence and who are fully qualified with experience. I intend to advertise in the CPJ Research Noticeboard and will choose my respondents aiming to include a diversity of gender, experience and qualifications if this is possible. They would have to be in supervision and to have adequate support in place in the event of the interview raising issues that would need to be addressed. Due to the depth and nature of the subject, I am aware of keeping extremely tight boundaries and that confidentiality needs to be secure. Permission will be sought by participants at all stages and transparency will be considered of the utmost importance.

As the heuristic methodology falls into the category of qualitative research, which is not the dominant paradigm, I am aware of the need for this work to be tested rigorously throughout. The work needs to be plausible and sustainable in relation to counselling research with substantial evidence of background material, some scientific input and in context. I also intend to use an audit trail.

I am aware that contemplative silence as a way of life brings an extra dimension to my work and I wonder whether this would be reflected in the work of other counsellors. This research may challenge the Post-modern Western culture of the counselling profession to consider this phenomenon.

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **ADVERTISEMENT TO BE PLACED IN THE CPJ RESEARCH NOTICE BOARD**

#### **PhD Research.**

**‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study. Participants needed to share their experiences. Contact Marjorie Humphreys. Tel:**

## **APPENDIX V**

### **LETTER FOR RESPONDENTS TO THE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE CPJ RESEARCH NOTICEBOARD.**

Dear

PhD Research Project

‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study.’

Thank you for responding to the advertisement in the CPJ Research Noticeboard. I enclose an information sheet which I hope will answer all your questions about this research. I will contact you again in the near future to establish whether, after reading the information, you still wish to take part, and if so to arrange a suitable date for our meeting.

If you do decide to take part I will require your permission in writing and will ask you to sign a consent form for this purpose. Please note that you remain free to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

MARJORIE HUMPHREYS

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **INFORMATION FOR CO-RESEARCHERS**

‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study.’

You have been invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand what this research will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully. If anything is not clear or you would like more information, please contact me.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You responded to an advertisement placed in the CPJ. For the purposes of this type of research, I have selected you in order that I have a diversity of gender, experience and qualifications.

#### **What will I be expected to do if I take part?**

I will make an appointment to interview you at a place of your choosing so that you can share your experience with me. The interview will have minimal structure and will be recorded. Our conversation will be typed up at a later date. The interview may take up to two hours and I appreciate that this will involve a great deal of commitment from you.

#### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Your identity will be kept confidential to myself. When the tape is transcribed this will be kept securely by myself and the findings will be written up in a way that will protect you from being identified. A copy of the transcription will be sent to you for approval and a copy of the final analysis will be sent to you.

#### **What will happen to the research study?**

One copy of the study will be kept at University of Chester Library and another in the Department of Social and Communication Studies Resource Rooms. Any published papers resulting from this research will not identify yourself.

#### **Are there any risks involved in this research?**

Although this is not anticipated, should the interview raise any personal issues for you, it is important that you are able to access support from your counsellor or supervisor.

#### **Has this study been ethically approved?**

Yes. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Social and Communication Studies, University of Chester.

## **APPENDIX VII**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

‘An exploration of the significance that the integration of silence as a configuration of self has in the lives of counsellors, and how this effects the therapeutic relationship. A Heuristic Study.’

My intention is that the interview will have a minimum amount of structure.

I will begin with asking:

What are your views, perceptions, experiences and insights in relation to the above?

I am hoping that participants will provide a wide range of perceptions, but if the conversation moves away from the subject matter I will use one or all of the following:

What does contemplative silence mean to you?

In what ways, if any does your life of contemplative silence impact upon your therapeutic relationships?

What difficulties, if any, result from the impact of your contemplative life on your work?

In what ways, if any does your contemplative life enhance your therapeutic relationships?

Was the decision to become a counsellor based on your philosophy of contemplative silence and do you see them as interconnected?

What is your counselling orientation?

How long have you been practicing?

When did you qualify?

In what area of work do you practice counselling?

Do you consider that there may be any negative impact upon your clients due to your practice of silence in your own life?

## APPENDIX VIII

### CONSENT FORM

I.....hereby give consent for the details of a written transcript based on an audio recorded interview with me and..... to be used in preparation and as part of research dissertation for a PhD at the University of Chester. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous and that all personally identifiable information will remain confidential and separate from the research data. I further understand that the transcript may be seen by Counselling Tutors and the External Examiner for the purpose of assessment and moderation. I also understand that all these people are bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

I understand that I will have access to the transcribed material should I wish to and would be able to delete or amend any part of it. I am aware that I can stop the interview at any point, or ultimately withdraw the interview before the publication of the dissertation. Upon completion of the research the audiotape will be offered to me, or, by prior agreement with me, destroyed.

Excerpts from the transcript, and possibly the entire transcript will be included in the dissertation. Copies of the dissertation will be held in the University of Chester Library and the Department of Social and Communication Studies Resource Room.

Without my further consent some of the material may be used for publication and/or presentations at conferences and seminars. Every effort will be made to ensure complete anonymity.

Finally I believe I have been given sufficient information about the nature of this research, including any possible risks, to give my informed consent to participate.

Signed  
(Co-researcher).....

Date.....

Signed  
(Researcher).....

Date.....



## **APPENDIX IX**

### **JOURNAL**

#### **Silence is my Professor**

Reflexive research facilitates the potential for personal growth (Etherington 2004d), and my journey through this research has involved many insights and stages towards becoming a more whole person. In an attempt to keep the scientific rigour or the critical realism and the perspectival together in one reflective process, the content of my journal oscillates between the analytic and the impressionistic. During the process I have also oscillated between panicky feelings and excitement, thoughts that I am not able to do this study and a deeply grounded sense of confidence. I have logged my feelings of anxiety, excitement, sadness and joy interspersed with logical, practical organizational material in the form of conversations, letters, data and poetry. For the most part I have recorded that my life has been too busy and disruptive, and my concern has been that I would not have the time to concentrate on my work in order to produce the standard of which I know I am capable.

I have continually questioned my motives, assumptions and expectations, and have been surprised to find that new revelations or levels of awareness have been revealed at the most unexpected times. For example during one incubation period (Moustakas 1990); a five week displacement where I had precious little opportunity to spend in contemplative silence emerged a realization that I had assumed that to live with

contemplative silence would automatically have a positive impact on the counsellor and hence the therapeutic relationship. I needed to adjust my myopic mental map to include some very real negative possibilities. This felt appropriate because it was real and balanced my perception.

Moustakas (1990) suggests the idea of imagining becoming the object of the research and to have a conversation between self and the object. This was a powerful and revealing exercise. During this process I recorded in my journal that silence is needed more than ever in this fast, noise polluted Post-modern world where the majority of people have lost or are losing touch with themselves. The concept of silence which is incredibly powerful, and gives space for reflection and search for deeper meanings of life to occur, became even more potent.

Whilst I already knew for myself the benefits of living with silence all my life and had taken this for granted, I now needed to come to terms with new information regarding the heuristic methodology of research. This fit into my lifestyle so perfectly that it was like completing a jigsaw, putting the last piece in place to produce an almost perfect picture. This was an awesome discovery.

A chance meeting with Brian Thorne whilst on a retreat was exciting and productive. He re-iterated his writings regarding the connection between counselling, spirituality and mysticism. This gave me encouragement and impetus to continue my investigation with vigour.

Another discovery was that even though I was aware that silence is not a void, I was able to clarify this more when I heard a radio programme on the subject of Dark Energy (Bragg, 2005). Dark energy in the universe is not nothingness, but a substance. Scientists do not know what it is made of, but do know that it is not made of atoms, is 'grainy' (Rees, 1999) and that it produces a sound equivalent to E flat, minus thirty seven octaves. This very deep sound is beyond detection within the normal range of human hearing. This was an appropriate metaphor for me to understand silence and inspired me to use the image of my star map representing the units of meaning for my data analysis.

Another metaphor which I found inspiring but did not use was that of music. Daniel Barenboim, the musician, in his 2006 Reith lectures made the connection of music to the spiritual journey. He talked about 'in the beginning silence' and gave examples of the importance of the silence as a pre-cursor to the opening bar of a piece of music. This silence required that the musicians discipline themselves to be totally focused with attentive waiting before the first note is played.

Finally I would like to share one of the poems that I wrote on my research journey. This poem is a creative expression of the new level of understanding of the concept of silence and inspired me to use this metaphor for my data analysis.

## **DARK MATTERS**

Swirling space, cosmic soup,  
Dark, dark, black holes,  
Dark matter, dark energy.  
This is the space – the gap,  
Between the words,  
Between and beyond,  
Apophatic traditions,  
Can tell of this story,  
Over and over again..  
Embryonic process,  
Grows in the gap.  
The silence creates,  
The silence begins to shout,  
Louder than any sound,  
Resonating stronger than words,  
Like the echo of the cymbal,  
Clashing – ringing,  
Yet without!  
Deeper and deeper,  
Like a well,  
Absence creating presence,  
Silence creating a new dimension,  
Space creating connections.

MRH

## **PART VII**

### **EPILOGUE**

Silence can be deafening,  
it may be understood as an intensity  
that we are not familiar with.  
(Levy, 1999 p20).



Reflecting on my work I have asked myself many questions and wondered whether the concept of needing silent times is a myth. Am I self-made prisoner of this silence? Am I asking too many questions, and is all of this beyond answers and questions? In a strange way, my way of being which includes a significant amount of contemplative silence has not only been the subject that I have researched, but also has been an important part of the heuristic process. Etherington (2004d) points out that we need to make space in our lives before we can focus without distraction on our project.

Throughout this research project I have been tempted to include so much more information, but the limitations of the numbers of words has restricted me. I would have included a detailed account of the metaphor of the space between the stars in the universe, and about black holes, dark matter and dark energy. I would have included information regarding the metaphor of music and the reference to Daniel Barenboim's 2006 Reith lectures. Both of these metaphors are expanded to some degree in my journal (appendix VII). These metaphors of cosmology and music are my own, and not of the co-researchers and, although it is important to acknowledge the use of 'self' in the heuristic process (Etherington, 2004d) it was not appropriate to expand on these themes in this particular dissertation.

The counsellors who became my co-researchers for this work were very positive and all shared rich, deep and meaningful material that I hope is reflected in the Outcomes

and Discussion sections. Feedback from the co-researchers indicated that no personal problems emerged from the process and all were very keen to see the completed work. Co-researcher Siloi was concerned about her identification being transparent and some of the verbatim data was edited according to her wishes in order to alleviate her concern.

The impact of silence on the lives of counsellors could not be described as cataclysmic, rather there is a perception of an imperceptible sense that permeates through the counsellor and impacts on the therapeutic relationship.

Ignorance is not a strategy for sustainable community. Whatever the outcome of this research, I question and challenge the learning about silence and the impact this may have on the therapeutic relationship. I am not in a position to say that it changed my life because it is something I have always done. I am in a position to present the outcomes of this research that I believe to be a valuable contribution to the counselling world and for the readers to draw their own conclusions, and act upon those conclusions appropriately.

